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MR. WONG

THE FAMOUS EXPLOITS OF DETECTIVE JAMES LEE

COMPLETE COLLECTION

Vol. 4 1940–55

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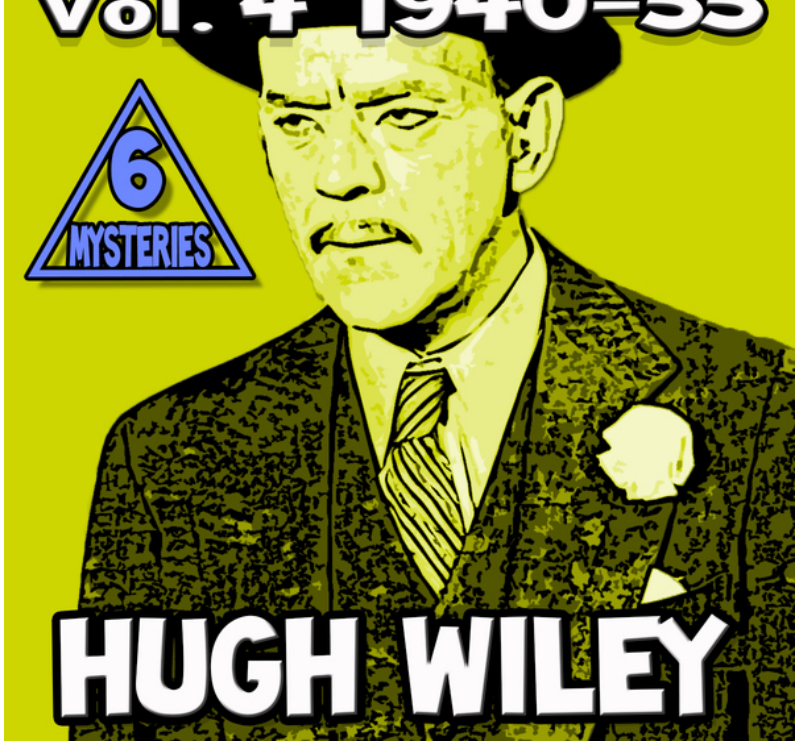

HUGH WILEY

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Collier's, March 2 1940
MR. WONG

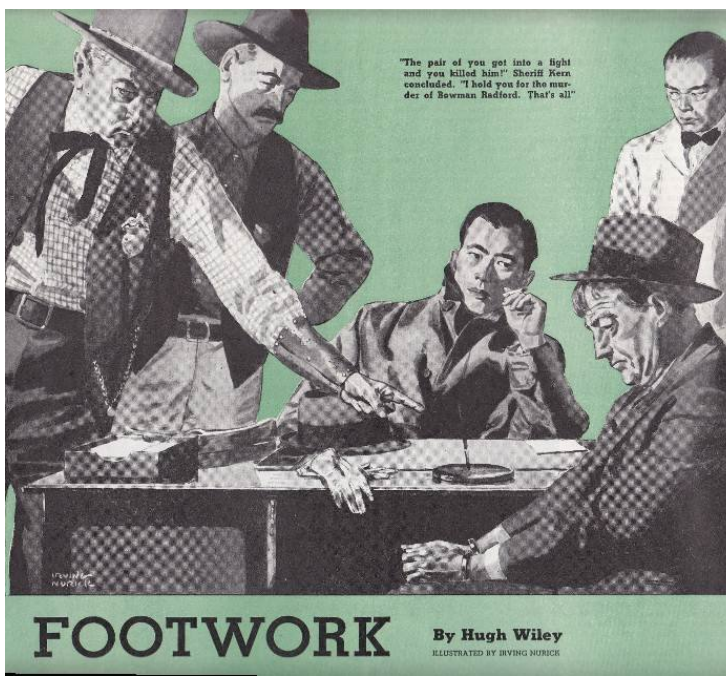
FOOTWORK

by Hugh Wiley

illustrated by Irving Nurick

Footwork. James Lee doing some fast thinking.

The killer of Radford was clever. But, as James Lee said, "A man can dig his grave with his tongue"


"The pair of you got into a fight and you killed him!" Sheriff Kern concluded. "I hold you for the murder of Bowman Radford. That's all"
FOOTWORK
By Hugh Wiley
ILLUSTRATED BY IRVING NURICK

"The pair of you got into a fight and you killed him!" Sheriff Kern concluded. "I hold you for the murder of Bowman Radford. That's all."

TO HIS neighbors—the few with whom he had exchanged a few civil words—Bowman Radford had been something of an enigma. No one had known anything about the man; he was

usually referred to, somewhat vaguely, as a “promoter.”

And now, in the old house at Sunridge, his body lay face down on the floor, sprawled between the library desk and the fireplace. The hair on the back of his head was clotted with blood. A miner’s pick, minus the handle, rusty and of a pattern used by the California forty-niners, lay on the desk.

James Lee surveyed the scene from the doorway of the library. The dead man wore a pair of brown leather slippers. The soles of these slippers were clean, but in three places between the doorway of the library and the fireplace against the west wall of the room there were traces of brown earth. Under a ten-power glass this earth appeared to be a mixture of loam and white crystalline sand and grass.

On the top of the desk, with the miner’s pick, rested a telephone, a collection of lead pencils and a scratch-pad. The scratch-pad was blank save for two simple problems in arithmetic—the multiplication of 85 by 4 and the subtraction of 340 from 420. The numerals in the remainder of the problem in subtraction, 80, were followed by a string of zeros extending to the right edge of the sheet.

A search of the wastebasket to the right of the desk yielded two slips of paper. On one of them, tabulated, were the names of four steamships—Crown Prince, Castle Prince, Cormorant and Cavalier. Opposite these names, respectively, 70, 80, 85, 70. The sheet of paper with the names of the ships had been torn from the scratch-pad. The other crumpled note in the wastebasket was on yellow paper. On it, written in what James Lee judged to be Radford’s handwriting, was a name and address: “Rolf Kratter, Room 862, Pyramid Hotel.”

“Kratter,” James Lee said, half aloud. “That would be Fong Sam’s Ko-ra-tar. . . . We will need him.” He reached for the telephone. To Jim Riley, in his office at San Francisco, “Go down to the Pyramid Hotel and pick up a man by the name of Rolf

Kratter, Room 862. I'm calling from Sunridge 1262. Take Wilbur with you. Bring Kratter down here to the Radford house in Sunridge if you nail him."

James Lee hung up the telephone and looked toward the door of the library. Radford's cook, old Fong Sam, was staring at him.

"Chen Yung—he come back now," Fong Sam announced.

"I will see him after a while," James Lee said.

He devoted the next five minutes to an inspection of the rusted pick that lay on the desk. Under the magnifying glass, James Lee discovered four of Radford's hairs adhering to the pick. Toward the other end of the pick, in the quarter section where an assailant would grasp the weapon, a series of fibrous yellow discolorations showed against the rusted surface of the iron. "Gloves. Short fibers; probably pigskin."

He turned and looked down at Bowman Radford's body: no struggle—one crack with that pick and the job was done. What motive—revenge, jealousy, theft, an insane man, self-defense? . . . Radford was probably seated at his desk. The killer stood behind him. Radford had no premonition of violence, no suspicion that his companion would attack him. . . . Maybe he had fallen asleep at his desk.

James Lee took the rusted pick in his hand and went through the motions of striking at the head of an imaginary six-foot man sitting at the desk. "Radford had his head well back, or else the killer was also a six-footer." be decided.

The Floor of the library between the fireplace and the door in the south wall yielded traces of the same earth that Lee had discovered between the desk and the hallway door. "Exit to porch. I'll have a look around outside after I interview Chen Yung."

From the porch door of the library James Lee looked across a

fifty-foot stretch of lawn to the gravel roadway leading to the garage. The glass door was locked. He opened it and looked down at the gray-painted surface of the porch. He saw against the gray four more discolorations similar to those produced by the brown earth on the library floor.

He stepped out upon the porch, intending to examine these, when he was halted by the ringing of the telephone bell. Jim Riley was on the line.

"Wilbur and I are in Kratter's room at the Pyramid Hotel," Riley reported. "We have Kratter with us. Do you want to talk to him before we start?"

"I will talk to him down here," James Lee said. "Bring him down right away."

He hung up the telephone. On the instant, the click of the receiver was echoed violently by the crack of a rifle shot over toward the garage and the whine of a bullet passing within an inch of James Lee's left ear. He heard the projectile smack into the redwood paneling of the library wall. A bluejay on the driveway took flight.

James Lee saw a tall Chinese man standing at the corner of the garage. The man was carrying a single-shot .22.

Lee stepped to the open glass door. "You damned fool!" he exclaimed. "Come here! Have you no better sense than to shoot without looking? Who 're you? Wait—don't come into this room."

THE Chinese man, speaking perfect English, began an abject apology: "I'm terribly sorry. I beg your pardon. These bluejays around here destroy—"

"Be more careful in the future," James Lee admonished. "Who are you?"

“I am Chen Yung,” the Chinese said. “Fong Sam’s helper. I am the houseboy.”

Abruptly, in Cantonese, as Chen Yung approached, “Your master is dead,” James Lee announced.

In the same vernacular, exhibiting no emotion at the announcement, “A superior man,” Chen Yung said evenly.

“How long have you worked for Mr. Radford?"

“Nearly a year,” Chen Yung answered.

“A good master?”

“The best. Kindly, generous, thoughtful and considerate of his servants. *Teh-huang*,”

At this, “Where were you born?” James Lee asked abruptly.

Chen Yung hesitated. Then, “In Hoy Soon City, Canton.”

“Perfect,” James Lee said in Manchu. “Perfect”

Chen Yung smiled. Quickly then, “A man can dig his own grave with his tongue,” James Lee suggested.

“Only the blind see ghosts,” Chen Yung said pleasantly .

The lines around James Lee’s mouth hardened. “Always the smartest monkey falls from the highest tree,” he suggested. “There is a last step to every journey.”

Chen Yung bowed. “A minnow laughs at the stranded shark.”

“No,” James Lee answered. Oily words but the heart of a tiger, he decided. To Chen Yung, “An intelligent man recognizes the will of heaven. No man can travel two roads at once. Wait there on the

porch."

Lee reached for the telephone on the library desk. To the operator, "Please connect me with the county sheriff's office." After a moment, to the man who answered the telephone, "This is James Lee speaking," he said. "I am at Bowman- Radford's house in Sunridge. Mr. Radford was murdered last night. . . . Perhaps the sheriff had better bring the coroner with him, and a man from the homicide detail. I will wait for them."

He replaced the telephone and called to Chen Yung, "Who killed Mr. Radford?"

"I have no idea," Chen Yung answered.

"Did he have enemies? Was he in trouble? Did he possess valuables that might attract a thief?"

"Nothing here of great value, so far as I know," Chen Yung said. "Enemies? None. . . . Trouble? Every man has trouble."

"That's all," James Lee said. "Go back to the kitchen and wait there until I send for you."

James Lee forthwith began a search of Radford's desk. In the middle drawer on the left-hand side there was a manila folder containing a file of correspondence—carbon copies of letters addressed to Tiburcio Lopez of Mexico City, and a dozen others addressed to Swenson & Clark of Seattle. With these were originals of letters from Lopez and from Swenson & Clark.

A quick inspection of this correspondence showed that Lopez and the Seattle people had been competitive bidders on the purchase of four steamships, the Crown Prince, the Castle Prince, Cormorant and the Cavalier, on all of which Bowman Radford held an option. A telegram from Swenson & Clark, final in its tone, offered three hundred and forty thousand dollars for the ships. A radiogram from Lopez in Mexico City, of the same date as the Swenson & Clark telegram, offered four hundred and

twenty thousand dollars for the ships.

The lower left-hand drawer of Radford's desk held a collection of photographs. In one of these there was a slim girl in riding clothes. The same girl appeared in thirty other informal poses. Underneath this stack of snapshots, James Lee found half a dozen portraits of the girl, made by various photographers in Mexico City, Paris and San Francisco. She was beautiful, beyond question; and there was a momentary regret in James Lee's heart when the ringing of the front doorbell interrupted him.

He opened the door to face Dr. Warren, Sheriff Kern and Joseph Conroy of the homicide detail.

"Where is the dead man?" Sheriff Kern asked brusquely.

"Mr. Radford's body is in the library," James Lee said. "I telephoned. My name is James Lee, of the Bureau of Investigation."

SHERIFF KERN held out his hand. "I'm pleased to meet you, Mr. Lee. Shake hands with Dr. Warren, the county coroner. This is my deputy, Mr. Conroy."

James Lee bowed. "Radford was killed, I believe, with that miner's pick there on that desk," he said.

"How did you get on the job?" Sheriff Kern asked. "

Mr. Radford's Chinese cook, Fong Sam, telephoned me. He was afraid that he would be held for the murder."

"He'll be held, all right. Who else was there in the house? You find anything?"

James Lee laid a pair of yellow pigskin gloves on the desk. "I think the killer wore these gloves. I found them in the driver's seat of Radford's car. The car is in the garage."

Sheriff Kern grunted. “Anything else?”

“Various things. Mr. Radford had a visitor last night. Rolf Kratter. My men picked him up in San Francisco. They are bringing him down here.”

“When are they due?"

“Any time now.” The sheriff nodded toward Chen Yung, who stood quietly on the porch. “Who is this other Chink?”

“He is a houseboy in this house.”

Of Chen Yung, “Listen, Chink, was you here last night?” Sheriff Kern demanded.

“It was my night off,” Chen Yung said. “I was in Palo Alto.”

“How long you been Working for Mr. Radford?"

JAMES LEE turned and walked out of the library. In the kitchen, to old Fong Sam, “These men are the police officers of this district. They search for the truth,” James Lee explained to his countryman. “In the meantime, I would have light on a dark pathway. Your master and his guest—they were at peace?”

“No—they quarreled bitterly.”

“How long did they quarrel?”

“Two hours, perhaps. I went to my bed while they were still shouting.”

“Thank you. You would say that the visitor murdered your master?”

Fong Sam’s voice was thin with fear. “I am sure of it,” he

affirmed.

The ringing of the doorbell interrupted him. James Lee turned.

“I’ll open it,” he called to Sheriff Kern. “It is probably my men, with Kratter. I’ll bring him in.”

James Lee opened the front door. He nodded to Riley and Wilbur. “Come in, Mr. Kratter,” he said to the third man. “I’m James Lee.” To Riley: “How did he take it?"

Riley looked down at the handcuffs on Kratter's wrists. “Like a tiger.”

“First door to the left,” James Lee directed, his eyes fixed on Rolf Kratter’s face.

Rolf Kratter looked about him at the group in the library, and then down at the dead man. “The dog is dead,” he grunted. “Good! Good!" Then, as his gaze lifted to the top of the library desk, “My gloves! I forgot them.”

“You are sure that they are your gloves?" James Lee questioned.

“Yes. I must have left them in the car when the Chinese houseboy drove me to the train.”

“What time was that?” Lee asked.

“Around 10:30,” Kratter said.

“Radford’s Chinese cook, Fong Sam, tells me that you and Radford had a violent argument last night.”

“I hated him.”

“Why?”

“First of all, he took my wife away from me. Then after that—”

“Just a moment.” James Lee opened the drawer in Radford’s desk that held the photographs of the girl. He showed several of them to Kratter. “Was this girl your wife?”

“She was until she divorced me.”

“She married Radford?”

“No. He would not marry her. She’s dead. He broke her heart.”

“If you did kill him, I can’t blame you for it,” James Lee offered. “Your other reason for hating him?”

“I owned some mining property. I was worth half a million dollars when I met Radford. Before the show was over he broke me.”

“Why did you come here last night to see him?"

“I had to have money.”

“And the pair of you got into a fight and you killed him!” Sheriff Kern concluded. “I guess that’s all, Kratter,” he said, facing the broken man. “I hold you for the murder of Bowman Radford. That’s all.”

“Yes, that is all,” Rolf Kratter repeated quietly. “I did not kill him, but thank God the dog is dead.”

Sheriff Kern turned to James Lee. “You want a receipt for him, Mr. Lee?"

“We’ll hold the deal for a moment, Sheriff, if you don’t mind.” James Lee turned to old Fong Sam. In Cantonese: “When you went to your room last night while your master and Mr. Kratter were quarreling, what shoes did you wear?"

“I wore these shoes.” Fong Sam exhibited a pair of rusty black leather shoes.

“Where did you sleep?”

“In my room back of the kitchen.”

“Thank you.” James Lee turned to face the houseboy, Chen Yung. “Where were you last night?” he asked.

“I spent the night in Palo Alto.”

“Wearing those Chinese felt slippers that you have on?”

“No. I wore leather shoes.”

“What time did you go to Palo Alto?”

“About eleven o’clock.”

“That is not true! You were here after midnight. The worm casts on the lawn—the dew does not fall until after night; Your pathway across the lawn is still clearly visible. The mud of the worm casts on the rug there and there and there—and on the painted floor of the porch— Why did you wear Mr. Kratter’s gloves when you came in? Why did you return them to the car?”

“What do you mean? Do you think I am mixed up with this murder?"

“You killed your master. Your motive? Shall we say you were trying to make sure that the Crown Prince, the Castle Prince, the Cormorant and the Cavalier would not be sold to Japan for the metal of munitions? Of the two offers, from the timbermen and from Lopez, your master had decided on Lopez, notoriously an agent of China’s enemies. Chen Yung, you are not of Canton. Manchu—your speech betrays you. Small hands, small feet—you

tall men of North China! Your small footprints across the lawn!"

Chen Yung glared at James Lee. “I was not in this house yesterday night!"

“You lie! You speak Cantonese as poorly as I speak Manchu. I admire the Kuomintang and their ideals, but in this job you have not served your party very well. You killed your master!"

CHEN YUNG’S eyes blazed with a sudden rage. “Yes, I killed him!” he confessed proudly. “The four ships would have been sold to Japan. I killed Radford, and now, follow him to death!”

Chen Yung’s right hand swung up and outward. A thin steel blade flashed down at James Lee’s heart. Before it struck, Frank Wilbur’s clenched fist crashed against the killer’s chin. Chen Yung crumpled to the floor.

James Lee nodded to Wilbur. “Good work,” he said. “Thank you.”

The sheriff looked down at the inert Manchu, then at Frank Wilbur. “Another ounce in that wallop would have saved the state a gashouse job,” he said admiringly.

James Lee addressed Rolf Kratter. “I deeply regret the inconvenience you have suffered at our hands,” he said, smiling gravely. “These jobs are never finished until—”

“Until they are ended,” Kratter suggested. “This one is ended, and Radford is dead.” He held out his wrists to James Lee. “These handcuffs—I have worn them long enough?" he asked. “. . . And thank you for saving my life!”

Collier's
THE NATIONA
March 2, 1940
5¢ A COPY
WHAT THE
GERMANS THINK
BY W. B. COURTNEY
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Collier's, April 13th 1940
MR.WONG

THE ROOM OF DEATH

(later rewritten as Cigarette of Death - Saint Detective Magazine, April 1955)

by Hugh Wiley

illustrated by Irving Nubick

The Room of Death. James Lee shoots it out. Page 23

A telephone call at midnight and two shots from the dark start another exciting adventure for resourceful James Lee

"Time is precious," James Lee said. "His wife is also in danger, and you are my only hope of saving them."

AT MIDNIGHT, to James Lee over the telephone, "They will kill him!" Jane Young declared. Her voice was thin with fear. "I know they will kill him, Mr. Lee. You must do something to save him!"

"Come down to my apartment at once," James Lee directed. "No more of this over the wire."

"I will be there in ten minutes."

A moment later, to his assistant, Frank Wilbur, over the wire, "Walter Young has disappeared," James Lee announced.

“Millionaire insurance man.”

“I met him during that insurance racket crusade,” Wilbur said. “What’s the play?”

“Come over to my apartment and we’ll get to work. Mrs. Young is on her way here now. I want you to sit in.”

In his library, after he had introduced Frank Wilbur to Jane Young, “Why do you think your husband is in danger?” James Lee asked the woman. He noticed that her hands were trembling. “May I get you a drink?”

“Thank you, no. I’m quite all right. But I know that something terrible has happened to Walter. I’ve always known that some of those desperate men would kill him.”

“What desperate men?” James Lee asked. “Please take your time and tell the story.”

“Walter has sent fifty of them to the penitentiary in the last ten years—firebugs and wreckers and insurance killers. Some of them have been released. I know they have him. He’s probably being tortured. I’ve warned him a hundred times. So has Mason Romer.”

“Who is Mason Romer?” James Lee asked.

“His secretary. He’s rather arrogant and stupid, but he knows everything about Walter’s affairs.”

James Lee nodded to Frank Wilbur. “Get Mr. Romer in here right away,” he directed. To Jane Young, “Has your husband received any threats lately?"

“I don’t know. Walter used to show me the most terrible letters, but he stopped that. They frightened me.”

“You will forgive the next question,” James Lee said. “Was Mr. Young interested in another woman?"

“Absurd! I know there was no one else. I’m positive of that.”

"That complicates things,” James Lee reflected. Then, aloud, “When was Mr. Young last seen?"

“We had a dinner engagement in Burlingame for tonight. He usually spends an hour or two at his club before he comes home, but he was not in the club. He left his office at one o’clock, and that’s the last we have heard of him.”

“Mr. Romer will know about his engagements?”

“Of course.”

“Did your husband drive his own car?”

“His car is still in the Central Garage, half a block from his office.”

“Why haven’t you turned the case over to the police?”

“Because his captors might kill him if it became public.”

“WHY do you assume that he has not yet been killed?”

“Because he is worth more to his enemies alive than dead.”

“Why do you think his captors are holding him for ransom?”

“Because they are the kind of men who would do just that.”

“You seem to know who they are. Unless you are reasonably sure of their identity, your ideas may complicate our work.”

“I see what you mean, Mr. Lee. I don’t know who they are; I was thinking of a gang of insurance murderers that Walter sent to the penitentiary ten years ago. One of them, the most desperate, was

released last week."

"Who is he?"

"His name was Sears. He had other names. Mason Romer will tell you all about it." Terror suddenly clouded Jane Young's eyes. "Mr. Lee, I'm afraid my husband is dead!"

"No—he's probably alive. Maybe you had better return to your home. I will call you after I get through with Romer. Let me take you to your car."

When he put Jane Young in her car, in a final reassuring word, "We will do everything that can be done to find your husband," James Lee said. "Please go straight to your home. I will telephone you after I have talked with Mr. Romer."

Jane Young started her car. When she was half a block down the street, driving well enough, James Lee turned toward the dimly lighted entrance to his apartment.

In the shadowed doorway, as the door swung open, he felt the searing pain of a bullet plowing through the flesh of his left forearm. He heard the smacking explosion of two pistol shots directly across the street. He slammed the door from the inside. Then he saw a splintered bit of the frame where the second shot, missing its mark, had struck.

Ten feet ahead of him, against the baseboard of the entrance hall, he saw the little battered projectile. He picked it up, still hot.

In the library of his apartment, "First aid for my arm," he said to Frank Wilbur. "Then size this up and tell me about the gun that fired it."

Frank Wilbur scowled at the blood dripping from James Lee's left elbow.

"Flesh wound," James Lee said. "Let's get a dressing on it before Romer shows up."

"Who did it?"

“Some third-rate gunman from across the street. He shot me right after I put Mrs. Young into her car.” . . .

Frank WiIbur’s examination of the pistol bullet was interrupted for a moment when Mason Romer arrived at James Lee’s apartment. The visitor, evidently none too pleased at having his night disturbed, replied to Wilbur’s greeting with a question.

“What’s all the excitement?"

“Sit down, Mr. Romer,” Lee invited. “I’m sorry that we had to disturb you, but the occasion seemed to justify it.”

Mason Romer lighted a cigarette. “What occasion, may I ask?"

“Your chief’s disappearance,” James Lee answered shortly. “Walter Young has vanished. There are reasons to suspect that he is in serious danger.”

Romer yawned. “What makes you think he’s in danger?” he asked coolly. “He’s probably barging around on some new reform mission. Under cover.”

“His wife fears that he is dead,” James Lee said. “What do you know about an insurance killer by the name of Sears?”

“Mr. Young socked him ten or twelve years ago,” Romer answered. “Sears was mixed up with several killings. He was released a week ago.”

“Do you know of any threats that Sears made against Walter Young?”

“Once or twice during the trial he threatened to kill him. Lots of people threaten Mr. Young. . . . May I ask, Mr. Lee, if you have any other reasons for fearing foul play except Mrs. Young’s story? She’s a bit flighty in that respect, you know.”

For a moment James Lee considered the increasingly painful wound in his left arm. “Yes,” he said, “I have other reasons for believing that Mr. Young may be in serious trouble.” Abruptly, then, “Who would kill him, Mr. Romer? Who were his enemies?”

Mason Romer deliberated before he answered Lee’s question. Then, in a somewhat pompous tone, “A crusader with Mr. Young’s enthusiasm creates many enemies. He’s been fighting arsonists and accident fakers and wreckers many years.”

“What kind of wreckers?”

“Crooked shipowners. Mr. Young handles marine insurance with his other interests. He virtually owns half a dozen ships—the Silver Stack Line has them under lease.”

“I don’t follow you,” James Lee said. “Do you imply that his interest in the Silver Stack Line involves physical danger to Mr. Young?”

“Possibly,” Romer said. “His board of directors—”

“Just a moment,” Lee interrupted. Frank Wilbur had slipped in from the laboratory and had placed a note on his chief’s desk. “Pardon me, Mr. Romer.”

JAMES LEE scanned Wilbur’s report on the bullet. “Caliber close to .331. Weight checks with nothing in the American or foreign records. Must be new type of gun—maybe homemade?"

“You can speak freely, Wilbur. Mr. Romer might be of great help to us. Notice anything else about the bullet?"

“Well, the tin percentage is away up. Looks like Malay metal.”

“That settles it!” said James “That bullet was fired from one of

the new Japanese automatics from the Sanjo-Hiyoshi factory in Tokyo. I got a confidential bulletin on that automatic this afternoon."

He turned to Mason Romer. "This narrows things down somewhat. Mr. Romer, have Walter Young's activities ever brought him into any dealings with agents of the Japanese government?"

Romer smiled in a superior way. "That's just what I was about to mention before we were interrupted. The board of directors of the Silver Stack Line wants to sell all the ships to Japan at a good price. Mr. Young has opposed this in the face of considerable pressure."

Frank Wilbur whistled softly as he saw the grim look on Lee's face. The visitor rose.

"However, if I may say so," he remarked, "you are probably barking up the wrong tree, and Mr. Young is safe at home by this time. Why don't you call him and find out?"

JAMES LEE reached for the telephone and called Walter Young's residence number. A drowsy servant answered him.

"Let me speak to Mr. Young."

"Mr. Young is not at home."

"Let me speak to Mrs. Young."

"Mrs. Young has not returned."

"Thank you," James Lee said. He hung up and faced Mason Romer.

"This gets more serious every minute," he said crisply. "Mrs.

Young has had plenty of time to reach her home, but something must have happened on the way. Your information has been very useful. Mr. Romer. Just before you arrived I was hit by a shot from a pistol made in Japan. Now you tell me that Japanese agents have more than a little to gain by removing Walter Young, who has been missing since one o'clock this afternoon. No more time must be lost!"

"Where are you going?" Frank Wilbur asked Lee.

"I'm going to see if Sung Ying can help us. It's a long chance—but we have no time for routine methods. He's the one man in the whole city who might put us on the trail of the enemy. Telephone Sung Ying that I'm coming over to have a talk with him."

"Why not tell him to come here?" Wilbur suggested. "You've been shot once tonight."

"We can't waste a moment. It will be too late."

"Then at least let me go with you."

"Stay here," James Lee ordered, "and after you tell Sung Ying that I'm on my way, stick close to the phone. Mr. Romer will keep you company."

"But—but I'm not staying here, sir!' blustered Romer. "You have no right—"

James Lee shook his head. "I've no time to explain. But I will say that if you leave this apartment you may be in great danger of your life. Mrs. Young left here a short time ago, and has not been heard of since. If I work fast I might be able to save her from death—but I cannot permit you to take a similar chance!"

Disregarding the outraged protests of his guest, James Lee left his apartment.

The streets were almost deserted at this hour, and in the five blocks of his journey toward Grant Avenue, Lee encountered but

three pedestrians. When he reached the central section of the colony of his countrymen, he proceeded along the colorful thoroughfare until he reached Jackson Street. He turned to the left here and walked up the hill until he came to a narrow door between the Smiling Friend Pawnshop and the jewelry store operated by Sung Ying, chief of the Pacific Division of the Chinese Intelligence Service. He knocked lightly once on the door, and it was immediately opened to admit him. “I need your counsel and advice,” he said, in greeting. “I have a problem in your field, Sung Ying. Walter Young has disappeared.”

“The president of the Silver Stack Line?” asked Sung Ying. “I know him. That is serious. Let us go into my office.”

James Lee preceded him into the small room.

“How can I help you?” asked Sung Ying.

“Walter Young has various enemies, but I have good reason to believe that his present peril comes from Japanese agents in San Francisco, because of his firm opposition to the sale of his ships to Japan. Does that strike you as being motive enough for getting rid of him?”

Sung Ying’s eyes narrowed. “More than enough!” he said. “Shizaki and Nakamura are operating in this district. They are killers. When did Young disappear?”

“At least six hours ago.”

“Then they have probably finished him by this time,” Sung Ying said.

“Where can I find these murderous ones?"

“Nakamura will be in Kadsuma’s house on Post Street. My men have not seen Shizaki for two days.”

“Kadsuma’s house—the grocery store, do you mean?" James Lee asked. “I know the place. Why haven’t you finished with Shizaki?”

“He has escaped me twice. He is a fox.”

“I may help to kill him?” James Lee requested. “You will forgive me if I offer my aid?”

“It is about time that we were rid of him,” Sung Ying said. “I will be delighted to accompany you.”

“I cannot express my gratitude. Tell me—if Shizaki and Nakamura have captured Walter Young and Mrs. Young, would they hold them in Kadsuma’s house—kill them there?”

“Undoubtedly. Dead men are awkward property. Kadsuma has a clever way of getting rid of them.”

“How is that?"

“The empty fish boxes,” Sung Ying explained. “There is a fish market in the rear of his grocery store. The empty boxes are returned to the Japanese fishermen each day. At least ten of Shizaki’s victims have been buried in the night, miles at sea. . . . Wait until I get my coat—and a pair of guns—and we see if we can solve your problem. Are you armed?”

“Yes,” James Lee said. “One moment, my dear friend; I must let my office know where we are going, so that they can follow through on this if we fail.”

WHEN he had Frank Wilbur on the line, “Sung Ying and I are going to Kadsuma’s house on Post Street,” James Lee announced. “We should be in the clear within an hour. If you do not hear from me, get hold of Riley and look things over.”

“I still think I should come with you,” Wilbur protested.

“Stay where you are. Is Romer all right?”

“He’s gone to sleep in his chair. He’s a funny customer.”

“Good! Now, check your time—two-thirteen—and if I don’t call

you within an hour, follow up with Riley."

James Lee hung up the phone and turned to Sung Ying. “If anything happens to us, we temporize with Shizaki for an hour, until Wilbur blasts his way in with the rescue party. Let’s go!”

Nearing Kadsuma’s house, “Park the car here,” Sung Ying advised. “We’ll walk the next two blocks.”

“Right. Have you been inside of Kadsuma’s house before?”

“No. I have been in the store. It is a three-story building, you remember, but our job is on the ground floor or below that. What do you suggest if we suddenly discover that I am unable to talk them into opening the apartment door?"

“We shoot the lock off and go ahead,” James Lee said. “The lives of innocent people are at stake.”

At the doorway of Kadsuma’s house, Sung Ying rang the bell twice before a thin voice piped through the battered tin speaking tube set above the bell. “Who calls?”

“Two men of the Service,” Sung Ying answered, in Japanese. “Be quick! Open the door!”

“Shizaki?”

Instantly deciding from the question that Shizaki was expected, “Yes,” Sung Ying answered. “Shizaki and distinguished companion from south office.”

The click of two bolts followed. “We have long expected you,” spoke the thin voice through the speaking tube. “Enter.”

“Great luck!" James Lee whispered to Sung Ying. “They may have held Young alive waiting for Shizaki. . . . If they open fire, shoot them down as they come. Keep on my left.”

A Japanese man stood at the far end of the hallway before an open door. As the two marched forward into the dim light of an exposed bulb, something suspicious in their movements must have made the man realize his error. A deafening roar sounded in the hall, and a wild bullet smashed the light overhead.

"Down him!" James Lee directed. Sung Ying fired twice at the silhouette of the gunman in the doorway. The man went down.

Instantly, from beyond the lighted doorway there lifted a cackling chorus of voices. "We lose," James Lee said. "No chance, but keep your guns going."

He leaped through the doorway, firing as he went. A man faced him with a swinging automatic. James Lee's shot brought him down. Two others were shooting wildly. Lee's gun knocked one of them over, Sung Ying got the other. Then, out of the shadows in the corner of the room, there came a single explosion and the weapon dropped from Sung Ying's nerveless left hand. James Lee fired quickly and the Japanese sprawled on his face.

"That is Nakamura," Sung Ying said. "Good work! Kadsuma is dead there by the door."

"Shizaki?"

"Not here," Sung Ying said. "Come, through this door! There may be others."

The inner door of the room was locked. James Lee fired once through the lock, and turned to his companion. He saw for the first time that Sung Ying was seriously wounded. Flowing blood stained the left side of Sung Ying's coat.

"Let me go first," Sung Ying said. "I'll last for a while yet."

James Lee blocked the way with his tortured arm. "You are badly hurt," he objected. "If they get me, do your best."

He slipped his empty automatic into his coat pocket and reached for his second gun that he carried in a shoulder holster. He kicked

the door open. Save for two occupants, Walter Young and his wife, gagged and wired to their chairs, the room was empty.

“We win!" James Lee whispered. “They’re alive!"

“Held for Shizaki’s coming,” Sung Ying faltered.

“You are in bad shape, my friend. Do you think you could bear up for just a few moments longer?"

“I will do my best,” said Sung Ying.

Jane Young, unconscious, was barely breathing. James Lee tore the padded cloth from her mouth. Color came to her ashen face as he turned to perform the same quick service for her husband. Walter Young gulped the smoke-laden air for a moment, and then, falteringly, “Is she dead?” he cried.

IN THAT busy minute, James Lee was unaware that behind him his countryman, who had sadly misjudged his strength, was slipping quietly to the floor. Collapsing from the pain of his wound, Sung Ying lay across the threshold.

“Mrs. Young is breathing,” James Lee said, turning again to the problem of breaking the twisted wires that bound the woman to her chair. “She will be all right when—”

A strange voice from the doorway interrupted him.

“Good evening, Mr. Lee. Saving much trouble for me by coming to die here. I am Shizaki.”

James Lee whirled to face the invader. The Japanese, smiling, stood in the doorway with a leveled automatic.

“If you please, not touching wire on hands of lady.”

“Shizakil” James Lee saw in a flash that here was death.

“Shizaki, yes! Having honor first time to meet so much famous James Lee. Having many thanks for Mr. Lee coming here to die, saving small Shizaki trouble finding honorable gentleman.” The Japanese walked into the room, glancing down at the unconscious Sung Ying as he stepped daintily over the body of the wounded man. “Everything finish now. Very bad luck; so sorry. At morning, feeding fish in ocean.”

Five feet away from James Lee, Shizaki steadied the automatic for the shot that meant the end of life for his opponent.

With death but one brief moment ahead of him, James Lee smiled at Shizaki. “A cigarette?” he temporized. “One cigarette before I die. It is your generous custom, as I remember.”

Shizaki nodded. “One cigarette, yes,” he consented. “One cigarette and some talking. Not moving hand fast, please.”

JAMES LEE reached for a cigarette and lighted it. As he struck the match, he saw, back of Shizaki, the fingers of Sung Ying’s right hand close convulsively in a subconscious gesture inspired by the sound of Shizaki’s hated voice. Sung Ying’s eyelids fluttered. Then, with his eyes open, his right hand moved toward the weapon that he had dropped at the moment of his collapse.

James Lee, fearful that Shizaki might read some evidence of Sung Ying’s awakening in Walter Young’s eyes or actions, held his lighted cigarette away from him and regarded its glowing tip. “Thank you for this blessing of tobacco,” he said to Shizaki. “If you will permit me to enjoy a little more of it?”

“Enjoy while talking,” Shizaki said. “Why coming here, Mr. Lee? Same like dying. I think smart Mr. Lee is very large fool. So sorry not more fool like Sung Ying, James Lee, all Chinese man. Japanese so much smart as Chinese man. Shizaki very old man,

James Lee very young child."

Sung Ying's fingers had closed on his automatic.

Without evident effort, James Lee compelled himself to address Shizaki in an even voice. "It is true," he said, "that your wisdom in this instance is that of a venerable sage. I admit that you enjoy wisdom."

Sung Ying's automatic inched up in line with Shizaki's heart.

The Japanese man smiled at James Lee. "First," he said, "closing door so that world not hearing shot when you leave life." With his gun still leveled at James Lee's heart, Shizaki edged toward the door.

James Lee realized that another backward step would bring Sung Ying within range of Shizaki's vision.

"This cigarette," he began; "you promised me that I might enjoy —"

The crash of Sung Ying's gun ended the sentence. Shizaki, dead before he fell, left life with his eyes searching in wonderment for a reason why his heart had suddenly exploded under the impact of the bullet from a dead man's gun.

"Oh, good man!" James Lee exclaimed, smiling at Sung Ying as he leaped toward the open door. "Play the game, giant of courage, for one more small moment, until I return!"

Over a telephone, three minutes after Shizaki had died, James Lee spoke to Frank Wilbur.

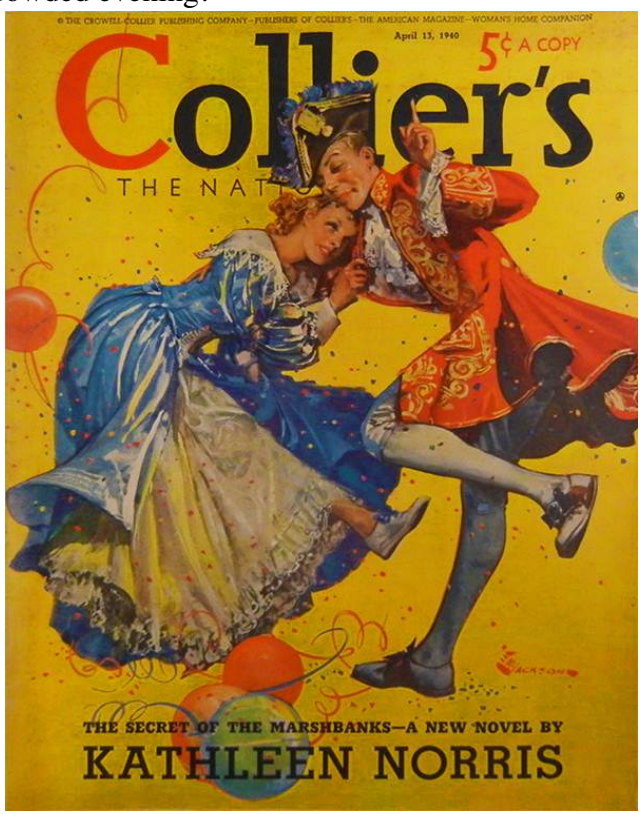
"A surgeon and an ambulance, quick, to Kadsuma's house on Post Street," he said. "Sung Ying is hurt."

"And you?"

“I’m all right,” James Lee said. “Young and his wife are safe. Bring Riley with you. There may be some more bad actors drifting in.”

“I’ll be there in five minutes. Mason Romer just woke up. He wants to know if anything has happened yet.”

James Lee frowned. “Tell Mr. Romer he is free to go home to bed,” he said. “That’s where I’d like to be myself. It’s been a rather crowded evening!”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THE NATI
THE SECRET OF THE MARSHBANKS—A NEW NOVEL BY
KATHLEEN NORRIS

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Blue Book Magazine, May 1940

MR WONG:

THE FOURTH MESSENGER

by Hugh Wiley

illustrated by Austin Briggs

That Famous Chinese-American G-man known as James Lee here deals with a most spectacular crime.

ACROSS the wide table in the library of his apartment, James Lee faced Chandler Hill. The pair had been classmates at college, and their conversation throughout dinner had been pleasantly reminiscent of the old days.

"Now that we've covered '23 matters, I have a technical problem for you," Lee announced. "It's right in your line—aviation."

"Who's talking now—the young sleuth of the F.B.I., or my old college pal?"

"Everything is off the record."

“Fair enough. Shoot the piece.”

“Why did those last three passenger planes crash—the Zenith Airways ships on the San Francisco-Los Angeles run?”

“You can search me. I haven’t read the Department reports. My own outfit lost eleven bombers around Canton last month.”

“Your planes were shot down in combat,” Lee returned. “There is no apparent reason why these three passenger planes crashed.”

“There’s always a reason,” Chandler Hill suggested. “They’re built to fly, and most of them do. Reports show anything?”

“Nothing definite,” James Lee answered. “Various theories. What makes a plane crash?”

“Enemy gunfire is the first thing I think of.”

“That’s out.”

“Check. Let’s go down the line.” Chandler Hill counted a few reasons on his fingers: “You get lost in a fog. Ice brings you down. You run out of gas. Your engine Conks. You fly too low to jump a mountain. You collide with another p1ane. A gas-leak burns you up. The stick jams. Your altimeter goes haywire; your compass goes haywire. You hit a power line. Your landing-gear sticks—is that plenty?”

“Yes,” James Lee said, “that’s plenty—except that none of your reasons throws any light on my problem.”

“Where did you get your problem?”

“The Department asked the F.B.I. to investigate these three Zenith Airways crashes.”

“They expect you to clear everything up where all the technical experts have failed?”

“Evident1y.”

Chandler Hill yawned. “Well,” he said, “that’s your personal grief. I’m a flyer, not a miracle-man. . . . This is good whisky.”

“Dig into it,” Lee urged. “Sherry is my dish. How are you getting along with your job”

“Rotten,” Chandler Hill replied. “Just as I expected. The airplane manufacturers are r’arin’ to hit the ball on anybody’s ten-million-dollar order, but the State Department dropped the boom on me. ‘Build and be damned!’ was the edict, ‘but don’t try to take the planes out of the United States!’

“What are you going to do?”

“Search me—route them under cover through some neutral county, I suppose. Delivery is out of my jurisdiction. I came over on the Clipper fully equipped with ten million bucks and authority to sign the construction contracts. But I’m licked. I’ve been here three months, and I haven’t turned a wheel.”

“What’s your next move?"

“I’d like to get back to China and start shooting where it will do some good. It’s up to the G.H.Q. and the government to solve the diplomatic problems; international law is too tough for my teeth.”

“CAN rifle-fire bring down a plane?" Lee asked abruptly.

“Of course—we’ve lost a dozen of them that way. And we’ve bagged twice that many.” Hill put down his glass and rose.

“You don’t have to shoot the pilot?”

“Hell, no! A lucky hit on a loaded bomber, and he practically disintegrates. . . . Listen, my lad; it’s midnight, and I’m on my way. How about lunch with me tomorrow. Grace Howard is in from China. I’d like to have you meet her.”

“I’m sorry—next week sometime,” James Lee amended, smiling." “Right now, no other engagements while I have this date with the

Department's problem."

"Give me a ring if I can help you with any part of it."

"Thank you; I will. Maybe you've already helped me more than you know. Good night, Chandler. Happy landings!"

"There are times when friendship pays small profits." Yut Sung suggested.

FOR an hour after Chandler Hill had left, James Lee worked on development of a systematic scheme for the solution of his problem. He decided that his first investigations would cover the tangible evidence; thereafter, a study of time and space as it applied to the three disasters; and finally, an approach through the biographical data of the crash victims. He discarded all surmise and theory; the official investigations and the newspaper publicity had furnished plenty of that.

In his office on the following morning, to his assistants Riley and Wilbur, "I'll be away for two or three days," he said. "I'm going to have a look-see at the three crashed airliners. While I'm away, I want you to get me full information covering everybody on the passenger-1ists of the three planes. Riley, you can dig that out. Wilbur, your job is to get a record of all flight conditions available. I want to know all about the weather at the time of the flights, what weather the

planes went through, and the peculiar characteristics of each plane. They're duplicates in design and construction, but the performance factors are always variables. You might get me some dope on the technical qualifications of the six pilots who crashed. Get a transcript of all communications to the pilots, and from them, while the planes were in the air. That's all. See you Thursday!"

The three planes had crashed on the southbound trip, within an hour of their departures from San Francisco. Before he left to inspect what wreckage remained on the sites of the crashes, James Lee detoured into Chinatown for a brief conversation with Yut Sung, one of his older countrymen.

To the World at large, Yut Sung was the proprietor of a pungent store whose shelves were stocked with porcelain. Under cover, the old Chinaman had for long years played an important rôle in the complex politics of his native land.

At a workbench against the west wall of the place, one of Yut Sung's men, an expert artisan, was repairing a broken bowl whose base bore the mark of the Emperor Yung Ching. The bowl had been broken into three pieces, and the workman was joining the fragments with riveted staples of soft wire.

James Lee spoke to this man and to one of Yut Sung's clerks.

"Thy master," he requested.

"In his private room," the clerk directed.

Facing Yut Sung in the back room of the place, "A small cloud can conceal Heaven," James Lee began in Cantonese, after greetings had been exchanged according to the ritual of Right Conduct.

"Truth adorns thy lips," Yut Sung returned. "A grain of sand can hide a mountain."

"What secret officials of the Army represent the Central Glory in this country at this time?" James Lee asked.

"Who am I to have such knowledge?" Yut Sung nibbled at the mouthpiece of a long bamboo pipe in the metal bowl of which glowed a

pinch of opium-flavored tobacco.

"I am in the house of a friend?"

"There are times when friendship pays small profits," Yut Sung suggested.

"Thank you." James Lee got to his feet. "A wise man understands a nod. It is wise to remember that friendship cannot be purchased with gold. . . . Long life, plenteous years."

He left Yut Sung's store and got into his car. At twelve o'c1ock, driving southward, he reached the town nearest to the site of the first plane crash.

A garage-man guided him to the spot where the plane had fallen, seven miles east of the town. "I was the third man to get there after she fell," the garage-man boasted. "Mister, she must of landed like a ton of brick! Nose down—and the front end busted to pieces no bigger than your hat. They found machinery and stuff scattered for half a mile back."

JAMES LEE spent two hours exploring the terrain at the spot where the where the plane had crashed and for a distance back along the track of the flight. Various minor trophies of the disaster rewarded his search —a. fragment of thin metal, one side of which was covered with paper; a six-inch piece of white metal wire, and a twisted gear of corroded brass pierced by a thin shaft of steel.

"The company sent in a couple of trucks a few days after the crash and cleaned everything up," the garage-man explained. "I drove one of them. I hear they had to leave them other two wrecks where they lit—country too rough to get near them with a truck."

James Lee nodded. "We'll go back to town now," he said.

The spot where the second plane had landed was in country too rough for motor-trucks. The third plane had crashed near the top of a hill in a broken terrain difficult of approach even on foot. James Lee returned from each of these two locations with a miscellany of débris that he had found.

TO Riley and Wilbur, in his office, he said: “It took me a day longer than I expected. The third plane crashed in very rough country.” To Riley, “Did you get the data on the passengers?”

“Fairly complete,” Riley answered. “Here it is—seven passengers in the first crash, nine in the second, and only five in the last one. Five or six of them were evidently under cover. There was a man and a girl in the second crash who would make a hot story for the newspapers. She was married to a Chicago man, and riding around with this Portland guy under an alibi."

“Forget it,” James Lee said. “We’re not concerned with that angle.” To Frank Wilbur: “How did you get along with the data on the flight conditions and the dope on the pilots?”

“I’ve got it all fairly complete,” Wilbur announced. “There’s quite a 1ittle evidence from people on the ground—farmers and people who saw the planes overhead. I have the course of the first plane covered, up to three minutes before she crashed. The pilot in the second plane was talking to a dispatcher when his trouble hit him. I haven’t got much on the third accident. The terminal boys heard from that pilot forty minutes after he took off, and that was the last message.”

“Thank you,” James Lee nodded. “Let me have the documents, and go to work.”

“Did you get anything hot on your trip?”

“I don’t know, yet,” James Lee returned. “I have a lead or two, but what they’re worth remains to be seen.”

Alone in his office, James Lee sat quietly at his desk for half an hour, contemplating various methods of attack that might solve his problem. Presently he put Riley’s report aside and turned to the information that Frank Wilbur had compiled.

He sent for Wilbur.

“It’s possible that one very important fact can be developed from your

data," he said. "Bring me a drafting-board and a protractor, a couple of triangles, a scale and a straight-edge. I want to plot the tracks of the three planes. Dig up a large-scale map of the country between San Francisco and the site of the third crash."

"Geological Survey sheets?"

"They don't cover all the route," Lee answered. "The scale is too big. Something about ten miles to the inch is what I want."

"The State Mining Bureau has a good map," Wilbur said.

Working with Wilbur's data, within the next half-hour James Lee had charted the tracks of the three planes. Crash Three was approximately on the theoretical course, but the first plane had been thirty miles west, the second twenty miles east of the course when they had crashed.

Contemplating the several factors in his problem—air-speed, wind-velocities, drift-angles and the performance-variab1es of each plane, James Lee sought a verification of a theory of vital importance that had come to him with the discovery of the twisted gear of brass at the site of the first crash. After an hour over the drawing-board on which lay the mining bureau's map, he announced to Frank Wilbur: "We're reasonably sure of one thing. I think it's important."

"What have you got?" Wilbur asked.

"*Each of the three planes crashed exactly one hour after it took off*. That means deliberate human agency."

Wilbur's eyes widened with the import of the information. "Holy old double-acting dynamite!" he exclaimed. "I get you! A thousand square miles of country. No record of the time of the third crash. That's what fooled everybody! . . . But who did it?"

"That's the tough point," James Lee said. "Get Riley in here, and let's ride that angle for a while."

To Riley: "We have good reason to believe that each of the three planes was bombed from the inside—wrecked by explosives that they carried. Probably wrecked by time-bombs set to go off one hour after the plane's *scheduled leaving-time*. Let's say that we have the What, Where and When questions answered. The next thing is—Who and Why?"

"Did you get any Who and Why stuff out of my report Riley asked.

James Lee nodded. "You tell your story first," he directed.

"On second thought, I want to know more about Knight Patton and Gordon Chase and old Cornelius Ryckman," Riley said.

"Exactly," Lee agreed. "Let's see; Patton Was on the passenger-list of the first plane as 'Robert Ward.' Gordon Chase was on the passenger-list of the second plane as 'Walter Green.' Check?

"That's what I got from the coroner's report on the two crashes," Riley said. "Ryckman was an old China hand too," he added, anticipating James Lee's comment.

"Seven passengers on the first plane, nine on the second, and five on the third. None of them seemed to interest me except Patton and Chase and Ryckman."

"You and me, all six!" Riley agreed. "Patton got in from China on the *Hogenberg*. Chase got here eighteen days after Patton crashed; he came on the China Clipper."

"Good Work. Go ahead, Riley," Lee suggested.

"Cornelius Ryckman, traveling under his own name, was headed for New York from Shanghai, via Vancouver; California was an unscheduled detour for him. His home was in Shanghai, and he was a director of the Batavia-Canton Bank. I couldn't get much that the world doesn't know about him, except that he had engagements with some heavyweight bankers in New York."

In the next half-hour James Lee charted the tracks of three planes.

INSPECTING further data in Riley's report: "Knight Patton was Captain Knight Patton," James Lee began. "He did some distinguished fighting for England in the R.A.F. Gordon Chase put in two years training flyers for Chiang Kaishek. Ryckman's bank arranged the credits for Chandler Hill's purchase of ten million dollars' worth of fighting planes for the Chinese armies. . . . It is probable that the agents of China's enemies here on the West Coast are responsible for this job." For a moment Lee's face hardened. "Damned ruthless devils!" he grated. "Deliberate murder of thirty people! . . . Killers. Well, let's see if we can do some killing to balance the books. We have the why angle under control; there remains the single problem of discovering who bombed the three planes."

"What have you got on that one?" Riley asked.

"I've got some scrap that I picked up where the planes crashed, and that's about all. As a matter of fact, this isn't our job, from here on. It really belongs the State Department—but we'll take a crack at it."

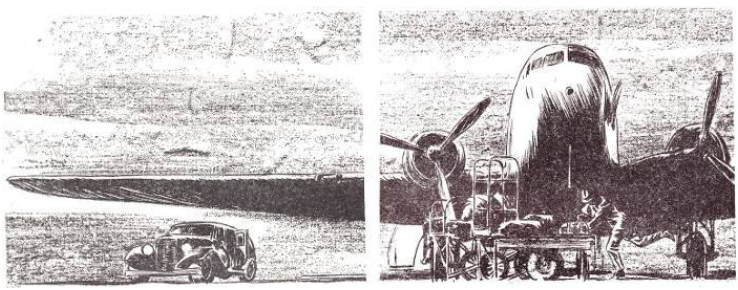
From the upper right-hand drawer of his desk, James Lee produced the twisted brass gear pierced by the thin steel rod, that he had found near the site of the first crash. He handed this to Riley. "This may be a part of the clock that timed the explosion on the first plane," he said. "See

what you can find about clocks as they apply to our problem."

"Okay," Riley answered. "I'm on my way."

"Wait a minute," James Lee countered. He handed Riley the thin piece of metal, one side of which carried a veneer of paper. "This is probably a part of the dial of the clock—but don't let this twist you up on the brass gear identification. You have two problems, not one."

A second exploration of the drawer of his desk yielded the six-inch section of white metal wire. He handed this wire to Frank Wilbur. "Observe that it is a very soft alloy," he directed. "I have some ideas relative to that piece of wire, but see what you can do in digging up the facts about it before I confuse you with my theories."



"Follow me with the car," James Lee directed. He wheeled the light truck and its cargo of three packages toward the end of the field.

WHEN Wilbur had left, James Lee turned his attention to mail which turned his attention to mail which had accumulated during his three-day absence. The official communications had been opened. In his personal mail, bearing a San Francisco postmark, he found a message in Chinese. The message was written with a thin brush in the Hing Shu or running hand, and was obviously the work of a competent scribe.

"*The aspect of a coming event in a short time*," James Lee read. "*Death to be immediate penalty present pathway traveling*."

James Lee laid the death-threat on his desk and lighted, a cigarette. "Let me see," he mused. "There are several pathways being traveled at the moment. The narcotic; mob would not have written this. The Hindu murder cases are closed. . . . Some Chinese enemy of China. threatens me. . . . Or is he a Chinese? One phrase is written in a style that shows a limited knowledge of the Hing Shu."

He reflected that the running hand could not be read without a special study, and that long years of practice were required for proficiency in this mode. “Its abbreviations are reminiscent of the T’sao T’sz—the brush runs from one character to another here, and here, Without lifting it from the paper. . . . I know that school! This threat of death has simplified my problem!”

He laid the letter in the upper right-hand drawer of his desk with the trophies of his explorations where the three planes had crashed. Reading the rest of his personal mail, he was interrupted presently by the telephone.

“Where can I see you?” Chandler Hill asked. “Right away. It’s frightfully important.”

“Right away,” James Lee agreed. “In my office.”

“I’m on my way.”

Chandler Hill reached James Lee’s office eight minutes after he had telephoned. “It’s about Grace Howard.” He handed James Lee a duplicate of the death-threat that Lee had received in his morning mail. “Is this a Black Hand letter? Grace had a Chinese bar-boy read it for her. All he said was that somebody would kill her.”

James Lee glanced at the document. “Yes,” he said, "‘it’s a killer’s threat. . . . What is she doing in the United States?”

“Frankly, I don’t know. There’s a mystery angle to her that I never knew before.”

“Get her in here quick James Lee directed. “Where is she? I’ll send a man after her.”

“You can’t get her; she left on the twelve-o’c1ock plane for Los Angeles.”

Lee glanced at his wrist-watch. “It isn’t twelve yet by one minute,” he said. He grabbed the telephone. “Get me Zenith Airways, quick,” he directed. “The airport!"

There was a three-minute delay. Then over the phone came a voice. “Zenith Airways—Osborn speaking.”

“This is James Lee of the F.B.I. Has the twelve-o’clock plane left for Los Angels?”

“She left two minutes ago.”

“Bring her back!” James Lee commanded. “Ground her!”

“There’s another plane at two o’clock, Mr. Lee,” Osborn said. “If we can—”

“Stop that plane!” James Lee repeated. “Get this: it may be life and death. Order the dispatcher to call her back. I’ll be responsible. When she comes in, unload the passengers. Spot the ship as far from the airport as you can. Open the baggage door and the express door, and spot a baggage truck next to the ship so that I can get inside. Get everybody away from the ship. Keep them away till I get there.”

“Okay,” Osborn answered. “You’re the doctor—I’ll flag her.”

James Lee got to his feet. “Come along! he said to Chandler Hill. “We’ve got a tough race against time.”

“I’m with you,” Chandler Hill said. “I don’t know the set-up, but if Grace is in danger, deal me in.”

Racing south toward the airport, “I’m playing a hunch,” James Lee explained. He glanced at the clock beside the speedometer. “We’ve got forty minutes at the outside—fifteen or twenty after we get there. . . . I hope the killer hasn’t changed his methods!”

THE landing-field was clear as James Lee swung his car through one of the open gates. A dozen groundsmen and pilots waited for him. “Where is the grounded plane?” he asked.

“Down there.” One of the pilots pointed to the plane.

“Baggage truck alongside?”

“Two of them. What’s the dope?”

“No time now,” James Lee answered. “Keep everyone away from the plane. Stay away from it.”

Heading down the three-hundred-foot runway toward the plane, “You’d better take the car back and let me handle this,” Lee said to Chandler Hill. “It may let go ahead of time.”

“Forget it,” Hill returned. “You’ll need help. . . . That was Grace Howard standing there with those two pilots.”

Nearing the grounded plane, “Climb into the baggage compartment and heave the stuff out on the truck,” Lee directed. “We have fifteen minutes to go. Make it snappy.”

In the express compartment of the plane, James Lee devoted three precious minutes to an inspection of the various packages stored there. He selected three, and lowered them carefully to the truck. He called back to Chandler Hill.

“I think I have what I wanted,” he said. “Come here and lend me a hand.”

When Chandler Hill came up ahead, “Follow me with the car,” James Lee directed. “Ten minutes to go, and I’m not much of a runner.” James Lee wheeled the light truck and its cargo of three packages toward the edge of the field. When he had pushed the truck a thousand feet from the plane, he left it and joined Chandler Hill in the car.

“Head for the airport,” he directed. “We have four minutes! One express package on that truck will probably explode in the next four minutes!"

At the airport, one of the employees walked out to meet the car. “I’m John Osborn,” he said to Chandler Hill. “Everybody is—”

“This is James Lee,” Hill interrupted.

“Get me to a telephone,” James Lee directed.

From the airport telephone, James Lee called his San Francisco office. To Frank Wilbur, “Send two men out and arrest Yut Sung,” he ordered. “Hold him in my office until I get there. Send Riley over to pick up Mursaki and Kamura. If they’ve ducked, spread the net. If you find

them, keep them apart until I get there. That's all."

"Okay," Wilbur answered. "What have you got? Did they—"

The crash of an explosion out on the landing-field punctuated Wilbur's question.

"Get busy," James Lee ordered. "No questions! This is a rush job."

He looked up at the electric clock on the wall of the airport office. "On the dot," he said half-aloud. "That one was nicely timed."

RETURNING to San Francisco with Chandler Hill. "Miss Howard is a very lovely girl," James Lee commented. "If you will forgive me for asking, how soon do you plan on marrying her?"

"Forgive you!" Chandler Hill struggled for a moment with his emotions. "You saved her life. . . . I'd marry her today if she'd have me."

"She'll marry you immediately after her return from Los Angeles," James Lee advised. "She'll be off duty then."

"What do you mean?"

"She is the fourth messenger," James Lee explained. "Knight Patton, Gordon Chase, Cornelius Ryckman—all killed in line of duty. They represented China in your airplane deal. Miss Howard will turn the trick. . . . In strict confidence, she is over here for your bombing-planes. Easy enough to buy them, but hard to get them delivered. She has it all worked out. She's a grand girl; permit me to congratulate you."

"Do you mean that they were on her trail—that the fourth plane was to be bombed because she was on board?"

"I think that was the plan," James Lee said. "That's my theory—subject to confirmation."

"How did you work it out?" Chandler Hill asked. "Open up. I'll keep my mouth shut—word of honor."

AFTER a moment, Lee began: "It's a bit intricate: I found a brass gear wheel and a piece of the dial of a clock where the first plane was wrecked. The main point was the strange coincidence of time—each of the three planes crashed exactly one hour after it took off. The other investigations seem to have overlooked that point. It's easy to understand how they missed it—different courses, different speeds, and different departure times. The time of the third crash was not observed by anybody. I had to figure out from charting the course that she had been one hour in the air when she crashed.

"The wreckers used different methods," James Lee continued. "The first plane went into a nose dive—probably caused by a bomb in the express compartment. The passenger-list for the second and third crashes showed that in each instance a mysterious passenger had missed the plane after his baggage was on board. The baggage compartment is back in the tail of the plane, and each of two wrecks indicated that the tail of each plane had been wrecked before it crashed. I began with that and worked ahead. . . . There was a piece of wire near the first wreck. It's identical with the soft wire that Yut Sung uses to repair a fine piece of porcelain—when it's worth repairing. It was probably used in the bombs to connect up the batteries with the detonator. . . . Patton and Chase and Ryckman were all here from China as military envoys. I might have overlooked the import of the first two murders, but three in a row meant action by enemies of China—not, probably, by official Japanese emissaries, but by fanatics. Finally, the death-threats that were sent to Miss Howard and to me—"

"What could you tell from those things?" Chandler Hill asked. "You must get them all the time."

"I do. But these were written by someone whose knowledge of Japanese writing had modified his method of writing the Hing Shu—the running hand in Chinese. Japanese script is more angular. Then there was the paper on which the threat was written—mulberry fibers: typically a Japanese product."

"But your man Yut Sung—he isn't a Japanese?"

"No, but he's probably a traitor to China. He was educated in Japan. He plays crooked politics. He is very wealthy. He has been mixed up in several Japanese narcotic enterprises, with Mr. Mursaki and Mr. Kamura."

“I see.” Hill nodded. “Evil companions—but how are you going to make sure?”

“We’ll probably find Yut Sung and Mursaki and Kamura in my office.”

“Then what?”

James Lee was silent for a moment, his eyes narrowed. “I doubt if they live to face the bar of justice,” he predicted. “When they fail in these affairs, the Japanese prefer to destroy themselves rather than suffer official penalties. As for Yut Sung—there is a Chinese method of torture known as the Thousand Deaths. Various countrymen of mine in San Francisco who serve the Central Glory are skilled in the technique of that torture. We shall see.”

IN San Francisco an hour after the confessions of Yut Sung and his two Japanese associates had confirmed his theory of the three plane-crashes, James Lee telephoned to Chandler Hill. “You can tell Miss Howard that she can forget the death-threat,” he said. “Our theories have been confirmed by confessions from Yut Sung and his two accomplices. Miss Howard is safe enough this time, but I advise her against further activities of a similar kind.”

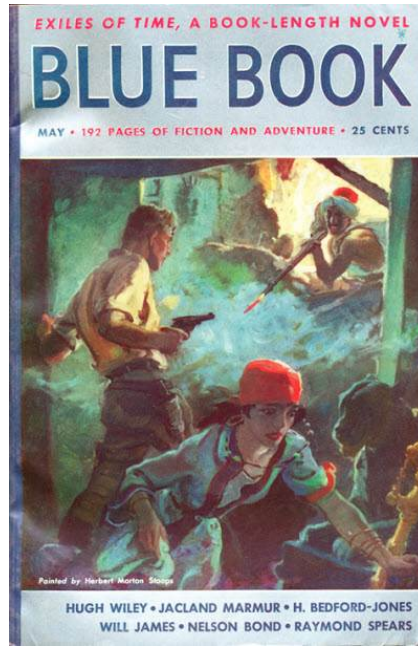
“I have just talked to her on long distance,” Chandler Hill replied. “She’s coming back tonight. We’re to be married next Monday—and you’ve got to see me through with the show. She won’t marry me unless you’re there.”

“Thank you,” James Lee answered. “You can count on me. I’ll be there.”

“You’re there a million, right now!” Chandler Hill complimented. “Boy, I owe you one bride and the best luck I ever had!"

“See you Monday,” said James Lee. “Happy landings!”

Another James Lee story by Hugh Wiley will appear in an early issue.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Blue Book, June 1940

Mr. Wong:

COLD BLOOD

A James Lee detective story—

by Hugh Wiley

illustrated by Hamilton Greene

ON Sunday afternoon, in his office in San Francisco, James Lee, of the Nartotic Bureau turned away from a sheet of memoranda that lay on his desk. He summoned his secretary. A trace of impatience was in his voice. “Call Los Angeles and Reno, and ask Mr. Morgan and Mr. Blair to come in here at once,” he directed. “Tell them to catch the first available planes.”

When the secretary had gone, he left his office and headed for Chinatown. He walked along Grant Avenue until he came to the Double Blessing Bazaar. He entered this pungent emporium and smiled pleasantly at three somnolent clerks and at the proprietor, old Hing Moy. Out of respect for the elder Chinaman, Mr. Lee filled a moment with the appropriate phrases of formal salutation; and then, “I desire to speak with you in private,” he said.

Old Hing Moy led the way to his low-ceilinged office under the balcony ranging across the rear of the store. When Lee was seated, Hing Moy asked:

“The subject of our conference?”

Abandoning all superfluous ceremony, “Why have you

summoned the killers?" Lee asked with a directness that made old Hing Moy blink his eyes. "Can it be that my ears are liars? .Six men, notoriously the messengers of death, who serve you and the various other elders of your League—summoned from New York and Chicago and Seattle! Shall I name them?"

Old Hing Moy smiled. "It is unnecessary," he said. "You are of clear perception."

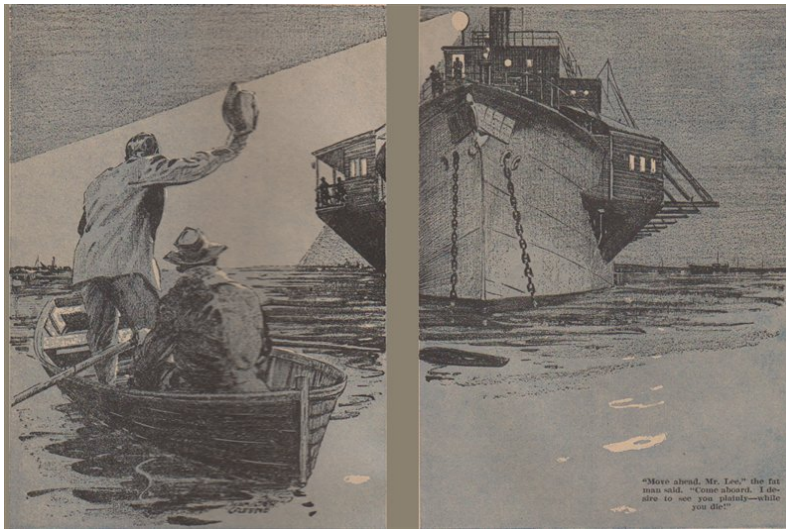
"I have one thousand eyes," James Lee admitted blandly. "Have these killers been summoned to avenge Sin Yut's theft of Autumn Lotus?"

Hing Moy nodded. "Yes. The mantle of deception cannot hide the truth from you."

"You know that Sin Yut has married her—that she is his Number One wife?"

"A matter or small moment, whether she is his wife or one of his slaves. The theft of Autumn Lotus must be paid for in blood."

James Lee reached for his check-book and wrote a check payable to Hing Moy. "Here are six thousand slices of Sin Yut's flesh," he said. "Six thousand dollars. It is a generous price for the Autumn Lotus. Sin Yut has married her, and he will be a gentle master. Give me your word that you will call off the killers, and this treasure is yours."



"Move ahead, Mr Lee," the fat man said. "Come aboard. I desire to see you plainly—while you die!"

HING MOY devoted a brief three seconds to contemplation of the possibility of driving a better bargain; then, knowing Lee's methods, he said: "You may tell Sin Yut to enjoy tranquil sleep. The *boo how doy* will not molest him. A cup of wine now, to celebrate this auspicious occasion—and to seal our lips."

James Lee lifted his eyebrows. Quick to observe this, Hing Moy said, "I beg your pardon."

"Thank you. The shadow will serve for the substance." Lee made a gesture toward Hing Moy: "Your health, long life, ten thousand blessings, and seven sons to mourn at your grave!"

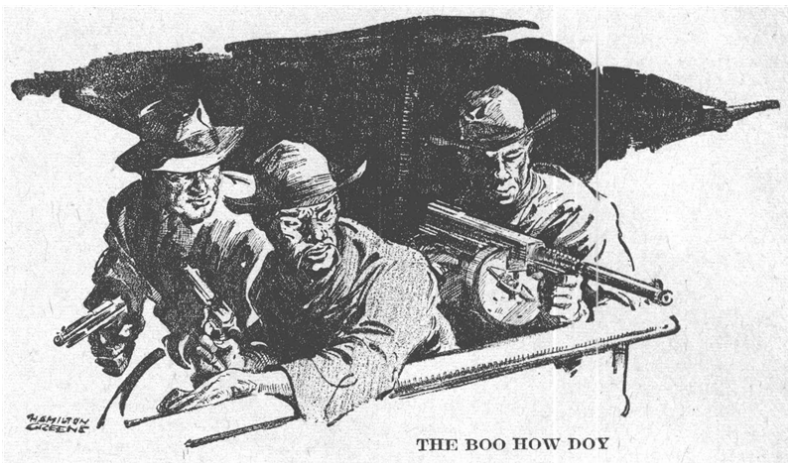
Hing Moy removed his spectacles as a token of respect to a superior, stood up, bowed thrice to Lee and shook hands with himself. "May the waters of life be cool in the throat, the fruits of heaven sweet upon thy tongue." Pointing up and down, then to Lee and to himself: "Between heaven and earth, only you and I share the knowledge of this moment."

Lee smiled at the absurdity of trying to keep a secret that would be known to Chinatown in the next hour. “Good-by.” he said. “Good luck!”

At the door of the Double Blessing Bazaar, Lee turned left on Grant Avenue and walked to his office. To his secretary, “I’ll be out for the rest of the day,” he said. “I’ll probably be back in the morning. Did you reach Mr. Morgan and Mr. Blair?”

“Both of them,” the man informed him. “Mr. Morgan should be at the Union Air Terminal right now.”

“Call the airport. I’d like to speak with him.”



The Boo How Doy

THE call went through in three minutes. When Edgar Morgan came on the line, “You have ten minutes, haven’t you?” Lee asked.

“Fifteen,” Edgar Morgan said. “We will be five minutes late taking off. What’s up?”

“Take charge of the office tomorrow,” Lee directed. “I’ve called Blair in from Reno. His district is loaded with opium. What did you get in the South?”

“Lots of it down here,” Morgan answered. “Worse than it has been in the last five years.”

“Where is it coming from?”

“I don’t know. Some Pacific Coast port, probably.”

“Check there. It’s moving east. Chicago was clear of it Wednesday—a thousand pipes were smoking last night. It is a big one this time.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to try to discover the source.”

“How?”

“I’m making my first move tonight,” James Lee answered. “I’m calling on Sin Yut.”

Shaken out of the calm that had characterized his conversation, “Holy old double-quick murder!” Morgan protested. “Listen! Are you crazy?”

“Steady down. Think fast. Sin Yut is vulnerable.”

“You mean that dame Autumn Lotus ?” Morgan asked.

“Exactly. Sin Yut was safe as a church except for that mistake. Old Hing Moy flashed a call for the killers on Monday. An hour ago Sin Yut’s life was worth less than thirty cents.”

“So what?”

“I bought it for six thousand dollars.”

“Who from?”

“Old Hing Moy himself.”

“I get you,” Morgan said. “It’s good work—if it works. Listen: let me make the play to Sin Yut. you’ll be blasted into hamburger before you get a chance to start your first move.”

“Thank you,” James Lee said. “I’ll take care of that. If my foot slips, you might—you might present him with a bill for the funeral expenses. There’s not much risk.”

“Risk? I still say you’re crazy.” Edgar Morgan began to talk fast: “What about your trouble with him last year? What about his Greek dope-runners that had you fouled in October? What about that mess of Chinamen you stopped at the border three months ago? He’s lost half a million bucks on you in the last two years. Go ahead with this program, and you’ll be dead by morning. Wait until I get there. Let me take the rap.”

“Little Autumn Lotus is worth more to him than I have cost him,” James Lee said. “I’ll play this hand myself. Don’t rock the boat.”

“If anything happens to you tonight,” Edgar Morgan declared, “Sin Yut’s next birthday will stay away from now on.”

“Thanks,” Lee said, “Good-by.” He hung up the telephone and turned to his secretary. “You heard me?”

The secretary, his eyes wide with fear, nodded in silence. Then, “Listen, Mr. Lee, why not wait and let Mr. Morgan or Mr. Blair go up there?”

Lee smiled. “Because neither of them happens to know Sin Yut as I do,” he answered. He rose. “I’ll see you tomorrow morning,” he said to his secretary.

He left the office. On the street, fifty feet from the entrance of the building, he found his car. “You may have the evening off,” he said to his driver. “Report tomorrow morning at nine o’clock.” He got into his car and swung into the traffic stream that flowed toward the approach to the Bay Bridge.

BY the time he reached the secondary highway paralleling the

channels of the Delta, night had fallen. Fifteen miles to the north, he swung into the narrow road along the south shore of Elbow Island. He slowed the car to twenty miles. The thin light of a fading moon silvered the willows that fringed the shoreline. The road, rutted and broken with the harvest traffic, demanded careful driving. He looked at the clock on the instrument panel of the car.

"Seven-forty," he mused. "Another mile and then the game begins."

Another mile along the way, where the road dived into the ghostly shade of a clump of sycamores, he parked the car. At the brink of the levee, near the water's edge, a spot of fire glowed red in the moonlight.

"What do you want?" a voice asked.

"Can you row me down to Sin Yut's boat?"

"That's my job," the voice answered. "Are you a Chink?"

James Lee blinked at the red glow of the boatman's fire. "No," he said. He got into the boat.

The boatman began rowing westward with the slow tidal current.

"Has Sin Yut shifted the Pavilion of Delight?" Lee asked.

"Sure. Things got too hot over near Dog Town. Too many white girls come aboard. How long since you been here last?"

"Six months," Lee said.

"I see. . . . It aint far now. She's laying against the far bank right around the next bend."

A HUNDRED yards from the Pavilion of Delight, a peremptory challenge rang across the shadowed water. The lookout's voice lifted loud above the medley of muffled music and the human voices in the cabins of the hulking craft. "I'll answer him," Lee

said. He called to the vigilant lookout: “Tell your master, Sin Yut, that James Lee wants to see him.”

At this, as if the mob on board the Pavilion of Delight had been engulfed by the moving waters of a tidal wave, the tumult of voices diminished to silence. There followed a sharp staccato dialogue in Cantonese. From the upper deck of the Pavilion of Delight a shaft of light launched downward through the darkness, searching the surface of the rippled water. A door of a cabin on the upper deck opened, and from the lighted rectangle of the doorway a fat man robed in flowing silk addressed Lee.

“Move ahead, Mr. Lee,” the rat man said. “Come aboard. I desire to see you plainly—while you die!”

“I too have words to speak regarding death,” James Lee replied. “Your death, not mine.”

“You have put your head into the tiger’s mouth. Come aboard before my guards rip you to pieces with their guns.”

“Get alongside,” Lee said to his boatman. To the fat Sin Yut: “A wise man understands a nod. .I come without weapons, claiming a guest’s immunity.”

Dead silence for a moment; and then to his Chinese killers on the lower deck of the Pavilion of Delight, “Hold your fire,” Sin Yut commanded. More loudly: “Come aboard, thou pilgrim of the night. For the moment have no fear.” Then tempering his formal courtesy with a characteristic cruelty: “You may dismiss your boatman,” he added. “Your craft on the return journey will be a funeral barge.”

Landing beside the Pavilion of Delight, two Chinese men suddenly moved out of the darkness to stand beside James Lee: “The door-up front.” The door opened to reveal a colorful group whose revelry had been halted by a sudden sense of impending tragedy. Two long fan-tan tables flanked a central passageway that led aft. The air was thick with smoke. Under the vapors of stale tobacco lay the heavy scent of opium. A dance floor beyond

the tables held an assemblage of dancers that included a dozen white girls. Through this mob Lee walked directly toward a stairway that led upward to open balconies from which visitors might observe the scene below. Sin Yut waited for him at the head of the stairway. Bowing to the fat proprietor of the Pavilion of Delight, "Plenteous years," Lee said. "Seven decades of felicity."

"Ch'uh liao si ti," Sin Yut growled. "You have entered a place of death."

"Enough of fighting," James Lee answered. "Where can we converse in greater privacy?"

"Does your insurance policy say anything about fish eating you?"

THE fat Sin Yut, a sardonic smile upon his face, bowed with some ceremony to Lee. "Please to enter my apartments," he said,

opening a wide door that revealed a room whose luxurious furnishings were strangely in contrast with the shoddy scene below. In the vernacular of the street: "You're a wise guy, Mr. Lee, but there's a lot you don't know," Sin Yut said. "Sit down. . . . You got lots of life insurance ?"

"Plenty," Lee suggested. "Enough to carry me through tonight."

Sin Yut sat down at a teakwood table. From a shallow drawer to his right he hauled out a blue .45 automatic. "Maybe this will make a lot of noise—but what of it? Does your insurance policy say anything in it about fish eating you?"

"I haven't read it very carefully. . . .Incidentally, read these." James Lee took three Service telegrams from his breast pocket and tossed them over to Sin Yut. The stolid master of the Pavilion of Delight picked up the messages. They were from agents of the Bureau in Seattle, Chicago and New York. Sin Yut glanced at the first one. His eyes widened in surprise, and his florid features turned gray with fear. His trembling hands made the reading of the third telegram difficult. He controlled himself with obvious effort and his face was livid. "The *boo how doy*—the killers! When will they be here?"

"The killers will not reach you," Lee assured him. "For the moment you may be at ease."

"What do you mean?" asked Sin Yut.

"Let us say that I have saved your life."

"Saved my life,' Sin Yut repeated. "At what price?"

James Lee leaned forward: "Sin Yut, you know that I have never lied to you. These men meant your death. I bought your life from Hing Moy."

"I have been blind. Ask what you will, and it is yours."

"You are careless with your promises. I desire to know the source of the opium that is spreading through the West."

Sin Yut cringed. “I do not know.”

“What is the source of your supply? Who are the principals of the syndicate? Where do I search? Where do I strike, this time, to destroy this latest enterprise?”

Sin Yut’s features went gray again. “I do not know,” he repeated. And then: “If I should tell you, I would be killed within the week.”

Lee frowned. “Your words are shadows on the water?”

Sin Yut faltered: “I have no choice.”

“I shall not force you to answer me.”

“One thing I shall do for you,” Sin Yut offered. “You are blessed with the perception of ten thousand scholars.” Over his shoulder he called to an unseen servant: “Opium,” he said. “Bring me a tin —unopened.”

A moment later the heavy curtains of a doorway parted. A Chinese man came in. On a lacquered tray he carried a rectangular tin, lithographed in black and yellow. Sin Yut waved the servant away. He picked up the lithographed tin and handed it to James Lee. “This will guide you,” he said. “You are rich in wisdom.”

Lee glanced at the rectangular tin container and slipped it into the right-hand pocket of his coat. “Thank you,” he said to Sin Yut. “My compliments to the lady Autunun Lotus; and now will you repay what I spent for your life and arrange to have me put ashore?”

“What did—my life cost you?”

“Six thousand dollars.”

To his unseen servant, “Get me six thousand dollars,” Sin Yut directed.

When the blood-money had been returned to James Lee, "The honored guest is leaving," Sin Yut said. "Tears of regret make this moment bitter."

"The moment is sweetened with memories of pleasures enjoyed," Lee returned. "May the Middle Pathway lead you to happiness. Great wealth for you, in the favor of Milo Fo; tranquillity in the smile of Kwan Yin."

SIN VUT'S boatman set Lee ashore. At midnight he was back in his apartment in San Francisco.

"I am tired," he said to his servant. "A decanter of sherry—and that will be all tonight."

When his servant had left him, he drank two glasses of the warming wine. Thereafter, for an hour, he devoted himself to an intensive study of the rectangular, brightly lithographed tin of opium that Sin Yut had given him. The bottom of the tin was bright metal. The top of the tin and its sides were covered with inscriptions in four languages. *"Portuguese skinless and boneless sardines in pure olive oil,"* he read. *"Net contents seven ounces."* At half-past one in the morning, possessed of a dozen significant facts concerning the opium and its container, he went to bed.

For an hour Lee devoted himself to an intense study of the tin of opium.

AT nine o'clock Monday, in his office, to Blair and Morgan: "I have a hot hunch about that stuff," Lee said, pointing to the tin of opium on his desk. "The tin can is authentic enough. The metal is 29-gauge, Birmingham. There is a trace of wolframite present in the tin—which probably means that the source was Cornwall. The opium was undoubtedly refined in Macao and packed in sardine-tins in Portugal. Get some wires out, Blair, and check up on the imports of Portuguese sardines along the Pacific Coast for the last thirty days." He turned to Edgar Morgan: "I want a list of all the Portuguese ships, or ships under Portuguese charter, that have come through the Canal to the Pacific Coast in the last month."

At half-past ten; “We can discard all ideas of Chinese or Japanese sources.” Lee decided. “In the first place, either would have meant Malay tin. No wolframite in that stuff. In the second place, the opium is in an authentic sardine-can. The inks and the design of the inscription check exactly with the real thing. Of the Portuguese ships that you dug up, Morgan, I think that tramp *Tamega* is the hot spot. She came up the Pacific Coast ten days ago. It makes the timing perfect. She probably landed her cargo somewhere in Monterey Bay. Get your hat, B]air. We’re headed for Monterey.” He turned to Edgar Morgan: “Blair and I will have lunch at the Del Monte Hotel. I’ll telephone you when we get there.”

Over the telephone, at one-forty-five, Edgar Morgan said to James Lee: “Go up and look over the Café Capitan at Brocado. It is a new night-spot, with a couple of hot numbers running it. Motta Barbossa is the boss. Another bad actor by the name of José Cabral is an undercover partner; thirty-five, face chopped up, five feet eight—has a dope record in Havana and New York. He has no business dabbling around in a penny-ante deal like the Café Capitan.”

“Good work,” Lee complimented. “Keep at it. I’ll call you later.”

Lee confided Morgan’s information to Blair. “It sounds interesting,” Blair commented. “What’s the play?”

“I want you to mix around the Monterey waterfront with the men of the fishing-fleet. I’m going to the Café Capitan and have a quick look-see.”

THE festivities in the Café Capitan had ended at three o’clock that morning. Lee found only a watchman on duty. He was a lanky Texan, fifty years old, and he had been overseas in the war. “Monday is a holiday for the cooks and waiters,” he explained. “All the dealers and everybody.”

“Do you open again Tuesday?”

The watchman nodded. “The chef, Dutch Miller, and his helper get here about one o’clock Tuesday afternoon. The waiters and bartenders blow in about six.”

“How long has the place been running?”

“Three months now. . . . Say, boy, what’s your name?”

“My name is James Lee. Do you mind if I have a look around inside?”

“You aint got no more chance to look around inside than a snowflake in hell!”

It became necessary for Lee to introduce himself. When this had been accomplished, the watchman held out his hand.

“Pardner, I’m sure proud to meet you,” he said. “My name is Sam Webb. I heard about how you cleaned up that ‘Frisco gang two years ago.”

“All right if I have a look around inside?” Lee repeated.

“I’ll say so! Look your head off. . . .What’s going on?”

“I don’t know—yet.”

Webb opened a door to the kitchen of the Café Capitan. This room occupied the southeast corner of the building. In the kitchen, Sam Webb said: “The dining-room is out there.”

“What’s this door?”

“I don’t pack a key to that door. It’s the pastry-room and the meat-refrigerator. I guess old Mutt Barbossa figures I’ll kill myself eating cake. Out this way to the dining-room.”

FROM the dining-room the watchman led the way to the lobby of the club. “That’s the bar there. The bosses’ office is through that door there. The bookkeeper’s joint is back of it.”

James Lee looked at the door in the north wall of the lobby. "That's the gambling-room, I suppose?"

"That's it. I got a key to that one, if you want to get in."

"After while," Lee said. "Have you a key to the office?"

"Sure. I got to answer the phone when it rings. The bookkeeper's room is right next to it."

Sam Webb selected a key from a collection of twenty. He unlocked the door of the office, clicked on a light and stood aside so that Lee might enter. "Step inside," he said.

Lee walked into the office. Over his shoulder he asked:

"Webb, how long since you have been in here?"

"I aint been in there since I come on duty. I got to vacuum the dining-room always, and the bar and the casino and everything, before I do much loafing."

"Have a look here," Lee directed. He pointed to the figure of a little old bearded man slouched across the office desk.

"Holy gee, it's old Mutt! I didn't know he was in here. I thought he left in Cabral's car."

"Motta Barbossa, the proprietor?" Lee asked.

"Sure. Listen, Mr. Lee, he looks sick to me."

James Lee unbuttoned Barbossa's coat and vest, and listened in vain for his heart-beats. "He is dead," he announced. Conscious of a quick annoyance at this added complication of his problem, he turned to Sam Webb: "I wish you would get your car and drive down to the Monterey waterfront, double quick," he said. "My associate, Joe Blair, is probably mixing around with the men of the fishing-fleet. Find him quick, and bring him back with you—and don't spill this to the police. I'll call them presently, but right now I need some time to work on this job alone. Leave your keys

with me."

When Webb had gone, Lee began a close inspection of the setting and of the dead man. A fresh stain of green ink on the lining of Barbossa's vest, the peculiar pallor of the man's skin and the unusual temperature of his body excited a quick suspicion that death had not been from natural causes. After ten minutes, confused by a jumble of new factors that had appeared in his complex problem, he said to himself: "Damn it, here's another jungle that I've got to explore."

"Holy gee, it's old Mutt! I didn't know he was in here. Listen, Mr. Lee, he looks sick, to me."

HE searched the dead man's pockets, finding a check-book, a fountain pen, a wallet that held a miscellany of papers and some currency, a bunch of keys, a pocket comb, two handkerchiefs and a dollar watch. He laid these on the desk in front of Barbossa. He picked up the fountain pen, from which the ink had leaked out to stein the lining of Barbossa's vest. He examined this pen un-

der a ten-power lens. He picked up the keys and looked at the door of the bookkeeper's room. Of the seven keys that Barbossa carried, the fourth fitted the lock of this door. At the far end of the bookkeeper's room, under an iron-barred window, there was a couch. A high desk stood against the east wall.

The steel door of a fireproof vault, framed into the west wall of the room, claimed his attention. The lock on the vault was fitted for a key, and the appropriate key was included on Barbossa's key-ring. James Lee clicked the lock and swung down on the short lever that operated the bolts. He opened the door of the vault. Stacked boxes filled it from the floor to the nine-foot ceiling. He stepped back, and reached for an electric-light switch on the wall near the door. He flashed on this light, and turned for a second look at the vault's contents. On each box was a larger legend, similar to the colorful inscriptions on the sardine-tin that Sin Yut had given him: *"Portugese sardines,"* he read, *"packed in pure olive oil."* He made a quick estimate of his find. "Too much fish! Six by eight by twenty—nearly a thousand cubic feet. Opium! . . . A thousand cubic feet. . . . Twenty-five tons!"

The crash of a pistol-shot interrupted his arithmetic. He felt the searing pain of a hot bullet burning through the muscles of his right shoulder. On the instant, seeking the protection of the steel door, e swung behind it. He reached for a blue-barreled .38 in his right hip pocket, and fired twice at the figure of a man framed in the lighted doorway of Barbossa's office. The first shot missed its mark, but at the second a yelp of pain came as a tribute to his aim. He saw a pistol drop from the man's hand. He stepped from behind the steel door of the vault and swung his .38 up to the man's heart.

"Steady, or I'll kill you," he threatened. "Come in here."

The man obeyed.

"Who are you?" Lee demanded.

"Give a guess, you damn' burglar! Who are you?"

With his left hand, Lee reached for the thin steel handcuffs that he carried. He tossed them to his captive. “They’re open,” he said. “Link your right wrist and get over to that window. Come along. Snap that other cuff around one of those iron bars across the window. Quick!”

Obeying, since failure to obey obviously meant death, the prisoner turned from the window, snarling his rage at James Lee.

“I’ll kill you mighty quick,” he said. “I’ll kill you like a rat when I get loose.”

“You won’t get loose—for a while. Who are you? Don’t answer! You’re José Cabral.” Remembering Edgar Morgan’s description of the man—thirty-five years old, five-feet-eight, face chopped up, and with a dope record in Havana and New York, he said: “Listen, Cabral, why did you kill Barbossa?”

The man cringed: “Don’t say that. I didn’t kill him.” Then: “Give me a towel or something, will you? You want me to bleed to death?”

LEE felt his own blood get and warm against his right shoulder. “You’ll live through it,” he predicted grimly. “Live through it—to be hanged!” He walked into the office and picked up the telephone from the desk in front of the dead man. “Get me the Chief of Police of Brocado,” he said to the operator. To the Chief : “This is James Lee speaking—Narcotic Bureau. I’ve got two men for you, one dead and one alive. Come out to the Café Capitan as quickly as you can. Bring your coroner with you. Ask him to bring a surgical kit. Two of us need some first aid.”

He hung up the telephone and gave a bit of advice to José Cabral.

“Take it easy,” he suggested. “Don’t bruise my handcuffs.”

He locked the door on Cabral and devoted the next five minutes to an examination of the kitchen, the pastry-room, and the refrigerator. He opened the door of the pantry with a key he found

in Barbossa's collection. He returned to Barbossa's office. He opened the door of the bookkeeper's room; and again, for ten minutes, he engaged himself with a further investigation of Barbossa's corpse.

Presently, addressing Cabral : "Why did you kill Barbossa?" he repeated.

Cabral, his face gray with pain, scowled at Lee. "Get me a drink of water, will you? Listen, wise guy, you aint got me for murder yet—and the chances are I'll beat your hop rap before I'm through."

"Who killed Barbossa?" James Lee persisted.

"You're a hop dick, aint you? You're supposed to know everything. You don't know nothing. Wise guy, you're licked!"

Lee was silent for a moment; and then, reviewing a dozen bits of contradictory evidence that he had discovered in his latest search, "Maybe you're right," he admitted. Again he asked: "Who killed Barbossa?"

"I should have killed him! The damned low-life!" Cabral raged. "That hop would have been spread out long before this, if he hadn't spent all his time playing around with dames."

The sound of men tramping through the kitchen interrupted Cabral's statement. Lee turned to see Blair coming through the doorway of the office.

"What you got?" Blair asked.

"Two men-and twenty-five tons of opium," James Lee answered. "That dead man at the desk is Barbossa. That's Cabral over there —linked to the window."

"Your friend Sam Webb is here with the Brocado police outfit," Blair said. "Chief of Police Joe Mason—and the coroner. Did you call them?"

“Yes. We need them.”

“Here they are.”

“Listen, wise guy, you aint got me for murder yet!”

JOE MASON, Dr. Gale and three of Mason’s men came into the narrow room. “This is James Lee—my boss,” Blair said to Joe Mason. Then, to Lee: “What the hell is the matter with your shoulder?”

Answering Blair’s question with a statement to the police chief: “This shoulder—and Cabral’s hand——that’s why I asked you to have your coroner bring his tools with him. Cabral shot me before I winged him.”

“Meet Dr. Gale,” the Chicf said.

Lee shook hands with the coroner. “If you will stop a little blood for me, I will be grateful.”

WHAT’S been going on?” the Chief asked.

“Cabral and Barbossa are back of the biggest opium job that has been put over in the last ten years,” Lee said. “I can take care of Cabral, but there’s an angle to old Barbossa’s death that’ll interest you.”

“Meaning what?” Chief Mason asked.

“Wait until Dr. Gale has a look at Barbossa.”

When he had bandaged Cabral’s hand and after he had dressed the wound in Lee’s shoulder, Dr. Gale fumbled around the dead Barbossa for five minutes, and then, brightly, to Chief Mason and the assemblage: “Probably a dyspnea, with a dilation of the coronary arteries and mitral regurgitation,” he said. “In other words, his pump blew up—heart disease. Look at the color of his face.”

“You can’t see much of it for the whiskers,” Chief Mason said.

“Look through his whiskers,” James Lee suggested. “Not through them but under them.”

The Chief of Police frowned.

“Meaning what?”

Lee turned the dead man’s bead to the left. Under the labyrinthian growth of beard on Barbossa’s right jaw, there were three small abrasions that centered in the dark area of an oval bruise two inches long. “Somebody clipped him with a right to the jaw,” Lee said, “—someone who probably wore a heavy ring set with three stones. A right-handed man five or six inches taller than Barbossa.”

“It’s a bruise, all right,” Dr. Gale admitted. “It looks as if somebody socked him in the jaw.”

“Before he died,” James Lee added.

“That’s right,” Dr. Gale said. “Other-wise it wouldn’t be black and blue.”

“Are any of the cooks around the place addicted to a kitchen drink known as a ‘Gentle Annie?’“ James Lee asked.

“What kind of a drink is that?” Chief Mason exhibited quick interest in the question.

“It was named on the Mississippi River,” James Lee said. “It is a blend of lemon and vanilla extract, fifty-fifty.”

“The chef, Dutch Miller, is a nut for that stuff,” Sam Webb volunteered. “Listen—he’s got a ring like you spoke about.”

“Go ahead, Mr. Lee,” Chief Mason suggested. “What’s the dope?”

“There’s a goblet out on a table in the pastry-room half full of the stuff,” Lee said. “Greasy fingerprints on it will spot your man without much trouble. If you will look at the rubber heels on

Barbossa's shoes, you 'will see that they have been dragged across a floor that was covered with pine sawdust. They're scratched, and there is some sawdust between the rubber and the leather. You will find some wool fibers on them, red and green. Probably from the rug in the dining-room. You'll see where Barbossa's heels dragged across the rug. There is sawdust in the cuff of his pants, and if you will ruffle his hair, you will find some more, from the floor of the refrigerator-room."

"I don't get you," Chief Mason said.

"If you will look at the door of the refrigerator-room, you will get me," James Lee suggested.

"You mean Barbossa was penned up in the refrigerator-room?"

"I think so," James Lee said. "Clipped in the jaw for a knockout, penned up—and frozen to death." He turned to Dr. Gale. "The body was ten or fifteen degrees colder than room temperature when I got here half an hour ago."

"That's right," the Doctor said. "I wondered what made him so cold."

"If you will look at the temperature-control outside of the refrigerator-room, you will see that it has recently been turned to the low side of zero," Lee continued. "That's not done in these meat-coolers. Finally—Barbossa's fountain pen. It is one of the kind without a rubber ink-sac." He turned to Chief Mason. "You saw the big ink-stain on the lining of Barbossa's vest—still moist, fresh. The barrel of the pen is broken. The ink froze while Barbossa was in the refrigerator, expanded, split the barrel and leaked out."

SWELL case," Chief Mason commented. "That's about all—except the motive and the killer."

At this, finding an appropriate vent for his venomous rage, Cabral exploded. "You dumb police hick! There's a reason all over the

place," he snarled. "Who was the last dame that lousy old chaser went for?"

"Nix on that stuff," Sam Webb objected. "Leave her out of this."

"Leave who out of it?" Chief Mason's tone suggested that he intended to blast the information out of someone if he could obtain it no other way.

"Dolly," José Cabral sneered. "Dolly—hottest number or our floor show. She happens to be the cook's daughter! If you want the guy that killed Mutt Barbossa, hunt up Dutch Miller. Mutt done her plenty wrong—and Dutch bumped him."

"I'd clip you if you was loose," Sam Webb threatened. "Dolly is a good girl. Dutch done right."

LEE turned to face the watchman. "Is that straight stuff?" he asked. "Does Cabral know what he's talking about?"

"Sure it's straight stuff," Sam Webb admitted. "Everybody knows that Barbossa jumped down to Hollywood on a plane last week for a three-day trip with Dolly."

To Chief Mason, "Dutch Miller's your man, I'd say," James Lee advised.

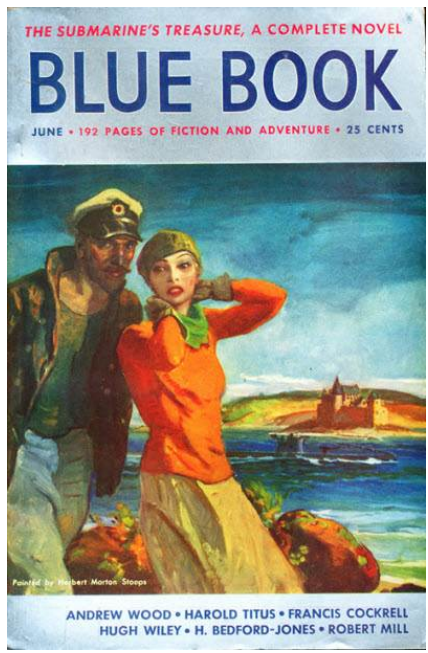
"Sure he's my man. I knew what was going on between old Mutt Barbossa and Dolly a month ago. I'll have Dutch rounded up in ten minutes—and I'll get him cleared for killing Barbossa. Let me get on the phone."

"Just a minute," Lee requested. "When you call your office, please have a couple of men come up here to guard the vault in the bookkeeper's room. There's a million dollars' worth of opium in that vault. I'll send for it tomorrow. I'm leaving now for San Francisco."

"Sure I will, Mr. Lee. Anything you want done is as good as done —with my compliments."

“Thank you.” James Lee turned to Joe Blair. “Go in there and put another pair of links on Cabral’s ankles, and bring him along,” he directed. “We can make San Francisco by dinner-time, if we step on it.”

“Beggars’ Holiday,” another story by Hugh Wiley, will be a feature of our next issue. With it will appear “Death on the Doorstep,” a book-length detective mystery by Gordon Keyne, and the first big installment of a serial by Dornford Yates, who wrote “Stolen March,” “Fire Below” and other well-remembered books.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Blue Book, September 1941

THE JADE DAGGER

A James Lee Detective story

by Hugh Wiley

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

Hugh Wiley's famous Chinese-American detective James Lee deals in characteristic style with one of his strangest cases.

AT two in the afternoon Jonas Porter telephoned James Lee and invited him to dinner. “I want you to look at a jade dagger that Kunimasa is bringing.”

“Sorry—can't make it for dinner, but I'll see you around eleven if you like.”

“I’ll be expecting you. I've just bought some other things that will interest you. See you tonight.”

At eleven o'clock that night Jonas Porter lay dead in his library with the jade dagger in his back.

When James Lee arrived at the Porter residence, he found Lieutenant Warren and three other members of the homicide squad. They had preceded him by ten minutes.

“An inside job,” Warren declared. “Porter is dead. Stabbed! He's lying on the floor of the library upstairs. Have a look, if you will. He was on his back when we found him. I rolled him over. The knife is still in him.”

“Who sent for you?”

“Porter's secretary—Wellman.”

“You're holding him, of course. Who else is in the house?”

“I'm holding everybody. There was a dinner-party. That Jap art-dealer and three other guests, and Wellman, and Porter's daughter, ate dinner. Incidentally, how come you to show up?”

“Porter invited me to dinner—and to look at a jade dagger that Kunimasa had found.”

“The knife that killed him! Have a look at the layout upstairs and then come down and lend me a hand with the people in the living-room. Ask 'em some questions and I'll listen. Casey is upstairs in Porter's library. You know him.”

“Fingerprints?”

“On the knife? Not a trace.”

James Lee walked up the wide staircase to the second floor. The library wherein the dead man lay, adjoined his bedroom.

James Lee nodded to Casey. “A bad one,” he said.

“A quick one,” Casey said. “He's still alive, by the heat of him.

Killed less than half an hour ago. You want to pull that knife out of him?"

"That's the coroner's business. Casey, did you souse yourself with hair-tonic or perfume or cologne before you came on duty tonight?"

"It's on the corpse," Casey said. "I smelled it too. Carnation. Stronger than a cheap barber-shop."

James Lee went toward the door.

"See you later," he said.

Downstairs, Lieutenant Warren had the household servants and the dinner company assembled in the drawing-room. When James Lee entered. "These people—" Lieutenant Warren began: "Poor little Miss Porter is over there, crying with Mary Connor, who is the housekeeper. This man is Wellman—Porter's secretary. These four men were Porter's guests at dinner—Mr. Kip, Mr. Walden, Mr. Mendoza and Mr. Kunimasa. You know Kunimasa, don't you?"

"An old friend," James Lee said, smiling at the Japanese.

"This man, Ranlett, was Porter's valet. This Chinaman is the cook. This other one is sort of a houseboy. What's your name?"

"My name Wing See," the "China boy" said.

"I'd like to talk to Mr. Wellman first." James Lee suggested.

"Take him away," Lieutenant Warren agreed. "The dining-room is a good place to be alone with him."

IN the dining-room, seated across the wide table from Robert Wellman, James Lee began: "How long have you worked for Mr. Porter?"

"More than twelve years."

"As his secretary?"

“His confidential secretary, for the past five years. I catalogued his collection and indexed his library. That was my first job with him.”

“Interested in Oriental art?”

“Not very deeply,” Wellman admitted. “I've learned what little I know about art from Mr. Porter.”

“The jade knife?”

“Kunimasa brought it.”

“When he telephoned me this afternoon, Mr. Porter said he had some other things that would interest me. What were they?”

“A manuscript journal of an early voyage, and two maps,” Wellman said. “Kip and Walden and Castro Mendoza—those gentlemen can tell you all about them.”

Questioning the three visitors about the journal and the maps: “A log—book of a voyage to Brazil,” Arthur Walden offered. “A chart of the route followed from Oporto to Rio, and a map of the harbor of Rio.”

“They were rarities?” James asked. “I mean—exceptionally valuable?”

“The journal is dated ten years before the first voyage of Columbus, Mr. Lee. Form your own opinion.”

“Where was it discovered? And the maps?”

“In my library—in Portugal,” Castro Mendoza answered.

“In his library,” Walden confirmed, “I found the lot—and a dozen other treasures.”

“I'd like to see them,” James Lee said.

Wellman looked at him. “They're locked in a fireproof cabinet in the library,” he said. “I'll show them to you. Will you come up?”

“Can you bring them down here?”

“Right! One moment.”

When Wellman left, James Lee asked of Castro Mendoza: “The journal is in Spanish?”

“Yes,” Mendoza answered. “One of my family,—explorer or pirate,—commanded the ship. He sailed in June, 1482, and landed in the harbor of Rio in October.”

“A priceless treasure! The discovery, of America!” .James Lee exclaimed “One of the greatest American documents! Written ten years before the reports of his discovery that Columbus wrote for Santangel and Sanchez!” Quickly then: “Mr. Porter had purchased the journal?”

“He bought the journal and the chart and the map yesterday,” Arthur Walden announced. “Kip and I made the sale as agents for Mr. Mendoza.”

“You will forgive my curiosity—” James Lee began, and then, interrupted by the entrance of the secretary: “Here is Mr. Wellman. Excuse me, but I'm eager to see the document—and the maps.”

When the manuscript journal and the two maps had been removed from their morocco case, James Lee began a quick translation of the journal. The Spanish text, legible and regular, written on coarse white paper, included occasional words and phrases in Latin. “Dictated probably, to some priest or scholar who accompanied the expedition,” James Lee suggested.

“Señor, no!” Castro Mendoza contradicted. “This pirate ancestor of mine was an educated man. We have other letters that he wrote. The writing in his own hand.”

"Killed less than half an hour ago," said Casey.

49

"Killed less than half an hour ago," said Casey.

JAMES LEE, after several minutes devoted to the journal, turned his attention to the chart of the voyage and the map of the harbor of Rio. Both were on vellum. The lettering was clear and sharp. The script of the journal had, in general, given place to printed capitals; but several notes, in script, were obviously by the same band that had written the record of the Yoyage.

After five minutes, concluding his examination of the maps, James Lee refolded them carefully and handed them to Wellman. "Thank you," he said. He summoned Lieutenant Warren "What do you know about the early music of the Church?"

"Not much," the Lieutenant admitted. "I was an altar boy for a while, but cigarettes made my voice too rough for chirping in the choir."

"Do you recognize this?" James Lee hummed three bars of a chant.

"Of course," the officer said. "Anybody knows that one. It's the *Benedictus."*

For an instant a thin smile curved the corners of James Lee's mouth. Then, "I'm through," he said. "I'm not interested in holding these three people any longer; except of course you'll ask

them-Mr. Kip and Mr. Walden and Mr. Mendoza—to remain in town for a few days."

Lieutenant Warren frowned. "The coroner will want them. He'll be here any minute."

"It's late," James Lee suggested. "Why not let the coroner take care of his job upstairs tonight and examine these men tomorrow?" Looking straight at Warren, James Lee's right eyelid narrowed a fraction of an inch. "It's been a rough night—these gentlemen need rest."

After a moment, "Have it your own way," Warren agreed. "Have it your way—but I'm damned if I see any sense to it." He turned to the three men who had sold the journal of discovery and the maps to Jonas Porter.

"You will stay in town for a day or two," he ordered. "I'll want you at my office at ten o'clock tomorrow—I mean ten o'clock this morning."

"A bit inconvenient," Kip said, "but I shall be there."

"We're booked for New York on tonight's plane," Arthur Walden announced.

"I'm clue in London in eight days. Defense of the country. I'm an army man, you know."

"Cancel your reservations," Lieutenant Warren directed. "We need you here for a day or two—maybe longer."

"Damn it all!" Walden protested. "Awfully awkward mess."

"Take it easy," Warren advised. I'll square you with the army….My office at Headquarters, remember, at ten o'clock. Good night—and don't try to leave town."

After Mendoza and the two Englishmen had gone, "Let's you and I put a little heat on Kunimasa," Warren suggested to James Lee. "Ask him about that jade dagger, and what went on after dinner. You ask the questions, and I'll listen."

Wellman, the secretary, got to his feet. “You won't need me?”

“Sit down,” Lieutenant Warren ordered. “Stay here and check Kunimasa's story.”

James Lee asked the Japanese art expert: “You finished dinner—and then what happened?”'

“Miss Porter go to her room. Everybody stand up. Somebody sit down for cigar and drinking then. I go to bathroom—”

“Upstairs?”

“This floor. Mr. Wellman go upstairs very soon. Mr. Porter leaving table. Think going upstairs. Mr. Wellman staying upstairs maybe ten minutes. Everybody soon walk around. Standing and talk. Then everybody going into drawing-room. Three men, Mr. Mendoza, Mr. Kip, Mr. Walden going to bathroom.”

“Upstairs, or this floor?”

“Not knowing. Carpet on stairs hiding sound of feet.”

“Who found Mr. Porter's body?”

“Mr. Wellman finding first.”

“I found him,” the secretary confirmed. “I stayed in my room for a few minutes after dinner; then came downstairs. Mr. Porter was not present. After about twenty minutes I went upstairs to his rooms. I thought he might need me.”

“For what?”

“Kip and Walden wanted to see some of the rarities in Mr. Porter's library. I thought he might want me to help him dig the books out of the safe—carry them downstairs maybe.”

From some subconscious source there came to James Lee a sudden realization that the problem might be more difficult than he had realized. The household was too complex for a quick reading. He was tired. Wearily, to Lieutenant Dan Warren, he said: “I'm going home. See you at your office—ten o'clock.”

AT Warren's office at ten o'clock, alone with the police officer, "Did you get any sleep?" Lee asked.

"Not a second. I trailed through two hours with the coroner and his men."

"Any new angles?"

"Plenty. Get this—see what you make of it: Porter's valet told me that the secretary, Wellman, probably killed Porter."

"The valet—you mean Ranlett?"

"That's his name. Valet, butler, and what-have-you. Smart egg."

"The motive?"

"I don't know. Miss Porter confirmed Ranlett's statement—in a way. She said that her father hated Wellman, that Wellman had the goods on her old man—some crooked deal about an oil company where Porter let his foot slip."

"I'd throw it away if I were you. If Wellman was blackmailing Porter, the killing would have been the other way round."

"Maybe; but here's another slug of motive: Wellman and Helen Porter are in love with each other. Porter said nix on marriage. He threatened to throw his daughter into the street if she married Wellman."

"Nothing there to make Wellman murder his boss. He might hate him, but he wouldn't want the shadow of murder on his love-affair. That's out, with me."

Lieutenant Warren scowled at James Lee. "Dammit, you're probably as twisted in the bean as I am," he growled. "What *isn't* out, with you? What's your new line on the layout if any?"

"I've got one. Send a man to Porter's house and have those two maps that we saw last night, and the journal of the explorer's voyage, brought here. Kip and Walden and Mendoza are here, as you ordered?"

“Of course. I had four men on their track five minutes after they left Porter's house last night. They're in the next room. What do you want the maps for?”

James Lee smiled wearily. “Maybe to prove to you that in your career as an altar boy you failed to learn the difference between the *Benedictus* and the *Jubilate,”* he said.

He reached for a telephone on Warren's desk and called for Jonas Porter's house. To Wellman, the secretary, who answered: “This is James Lee speaking. Lieutenant Warren wants to see the journal and the two maps. He's sending for them.”

“I’ll get them,” Wellman said. “Do you want to see me?”

“Not now, thank you....What did Mr. Porter pay for the two maps and the journal? Do you know?”

“Fifty thousand,” Wellman said. “Twenty to Mendoza and fifteen each to Kip and Walden.”

“Checks?”

“One check. I got the currency and paid them. They asked for it that way.”

“How much did Kunimasa get for the jade dagger?”

“He wanted five thousand; no payment was made to him.”

“So it's still his dagger?”

"I'd say so—as soon as the coroner releases it.”

50

JAMES LEE asked abruptly: “Did Sam Gun, or Ranlett or Mary Connor ever hear you threaten to kill Porter?”

“No. I have never threatened to kill him.”

“Verbal battles?”

“Several. He was quick-tempered. So am I. He refused to let Helen marry me—I never knew why.”

“Now, however, you will be married?”

“As soon as we can-decently.”

“She is heir to her father's estate?”

“The bulk of it. The servants are remembered in Mr. Porter's will Ranlett gets five thousand; Mary Connor gets ten dollars, and I get ten dollars.”

“How large is the estate?”

“It was about three million when the last will was drawn. It's about half a million now.”

“Thank you. That's all for a while, Mr. Wellman.”

James Lee hung up the phone and turned to Lieutenant Warren. “Do you want to run the show for a while, or do you want me to go ahead?”

“Go ahead. What next?”

“I'd like to see Kunimasa again.”

“You're wasting our time—but I'll get him.”

The diminutive Japanese art-dealer was ushered into Warren's office.

“You see everything?” James Lee asked, smiling. “The black curtain is lifted?”

“Seeing some more things with eyes,” Kunimasa said. “Seeing better with mind. Not seeing too much.”

“You saw the dagger in Mr. Porter's back. Did the killer use his right hand, or his left?”

“Thinking he use left hand.”

“You're probably mistaken,” James Lee said. “What makes you think so?”

“Mr. Porter falling like being pulled around with knife. Lying with arm sticking out.”

“Interesting,” James Lee said….“I thought you testified that you had not seen me dead man?”

“Having quick look while everybody busy,” Kunimasa explained.

“Wanting jade dagger. Afraid for taking it.”

“You'll get it,” James Lee promised. “That's all—unless Lieutenant Warren wants you.”

“Not me,” Warren said. “Run along and stay run along. You'll get your dagger.” To James Lee: “'What's the next card in vour deck?”

“Get Mendoza, please. Alone.”

“You're wasting time, but have it your own way. Work him over as you please. I'm clue for a nap.” The Lieutenant sent for the Portuguese, then stretched out on a long couch.

When Mendoza was brought into the office, James Lee asked: “How often has your library been examined by booksellers or historians?”

“By booksellers, never before. By two professors from your University of California, three times—and once by a student of American history, a man from Stanford University.”

“They all failed to discover the charts and the journal that Mr. Porter bought?”

“Mr. Walden found them.”

“And you received twenty thousand dollars from Mr. Porter?”

“From Mr. Walden,” Mendoza corrected.

“Thank you. That's all.”

James Lee called across the room to Lieutenant Warren: “If you're awake, you might refresh your memory of your early days a bit—and then sit in on a talk with Walden.”

“What memory? I'm awake.”

“Your memory of the days when you served as an altar boy.”

Lieutenant Warren sat up. “That was a long time back.” He smiled at James Lee. “What the devil are you driving at?”

“You'll know in a few moments. In the meantime, have you convinced yourself that Wellman, the gentlemanly secretary, killed Porter?”

“Not quite. There's plenty of motive—only, Wellman isn't the man to lose his head easily.”

“Maybe he's an exceptional genius at covering up.”

“That may be true,” 'Warren admitted. “What's the next card in your deck? I'm taking care of wellman.”

THE next card in James Lee's deck was played ten minutes later, following the return of the police officer who had been sent to the Porter residence for the maps and the manuscript journal.

James Lee laid the two maps and the journal on the table. “We will have the two booksellers in now, if you please—Mr. Kip and Mr. Walden.”

“I'll get them,” Warren said.

“And I'll ask you to remember the *Jubilate*—along with the *Benedictus.* If you're not sure of yourself, we might find one of your men who knows the music.”

Lieutenant Warren's eyes narrowed for a moment and then he scowled in mock anger at James Lee. “That's one I owe you,” he said. “Wrong again and I admit it.”

Kip and Walden came in. “Sit down at the table here,” the Lieutenant invited. “Mr. Lee wants to ask you some questions.”

Directly, addressing Arthur Walden: “You personally discovered these two maps and journal of a voyage to America in Castro Mendoza's library?” James Lee asked.

“I did.”

“In what condition were they when you found them?”

“As you see them—except that they were folded in with a bundle of other documents.”

“Were there many such unopened bundles of documents in the library?”

“Dozens—hundreds, I should say.”

“Do you read Spanish?”

“Yes,” Walden assented.

“And write it?”

“With some difficulty.”

James Lee handed the chart of the voyage to Lieutenant Warren. “Observe these erasures,” he directed. “This sheet of vellum was a page from some old volume of church music. You can see where the music notes were scratched out, roughening the surface of the vellum. Hold it to the light….And now, recall the *Benedictus* and the *Jubilate.”*

“I see where the notes of the music were erased.”

“Jubilate—or Benedictus?”

“Wait a moment. . . . Four lines of music here, and—”

“Try your voice,” James Lee suggested. “Hum it.”

Lieutenant Warren began his chanting interpretation of the faintly

visible score.

“That's enough to identify it,” James Lee interrupted. “What is it?”

“I was wrong,” the Lieutenant confessed. “It's not the *Benedictus;* it's the *Jubilate.”*

“Thank you.” James Lee turned to Arthur Walden. He handed the man a ten-power triplex lens. “Look at the writing in the journal here, under the glass. You will observe that the penmarks of the heavier strokes of the written script indicate that it was written with a steel pen. . . . Let Lieutenant Warren examine them also.”

AFTER a moment, “Examine the lines of chart and map where they cross the folds of the vellum,” James Lee directed. “The ink has run into the broken fibers of the vellum, proving conclusively that the lines were drawn after the vellum was folded. Incidentally, the ink is much too brilliant for its 'age'—like some precocious children.”

“Meaning what?” Lieutenant Warren asked. “Forgery?”

“Exactly,” James Lee declared. “You recall, of course, that the *Jubilate* was composed many years after the purported date of these maps—and could not therefore have been erased to give place to them by any contemporary hand. Besides, no steel pens were in use at the time. These are forgeries.”

“You're absolutely right!” Lieutenant Warren exploded. He scowled at Walden and Kip. “I'm holding the pair of you for forgery, along with Mendoza. Forgery, and maybe one of you for murder! A child can see that that junk is forged. It's a fake—and probably one of you stabbed poor Mr. Porter when he accused you of the job and wanted his money back.”

“This is perfectly silly!” Reginald Kip protested. “In the forty years that I've sold books, no man has ever dared to suggest—”

“I suggest that you be quiet,” Lieutenant Warren interrupted. “Take it easy!” He summoned two officers. “Take 'em away—and book 'em,” he ordered. “Hold Mendoza with 'em.”

Warren summoned the officers. “Take ‘em away—and book ‘em,” he ordered.

Arthur Walden glared at the Lieutenant. “I make a formal protest at this outrage. I shall have legal redress!”

“Write your protest in Spanish,” Lieutenant Warren suggested. “Write it in fresh black ink. Get out of here—the pair of you.”

When the storm had subsided, the Lieutenant grinned at James Lee. “Nice work; but now what? Do you think one of those birds killed Porter?”

“I think not,” James Lee said. “Today my countryman Sam Gun told me a few things. He cooked for Jonas Porter for nearly thirty years.”

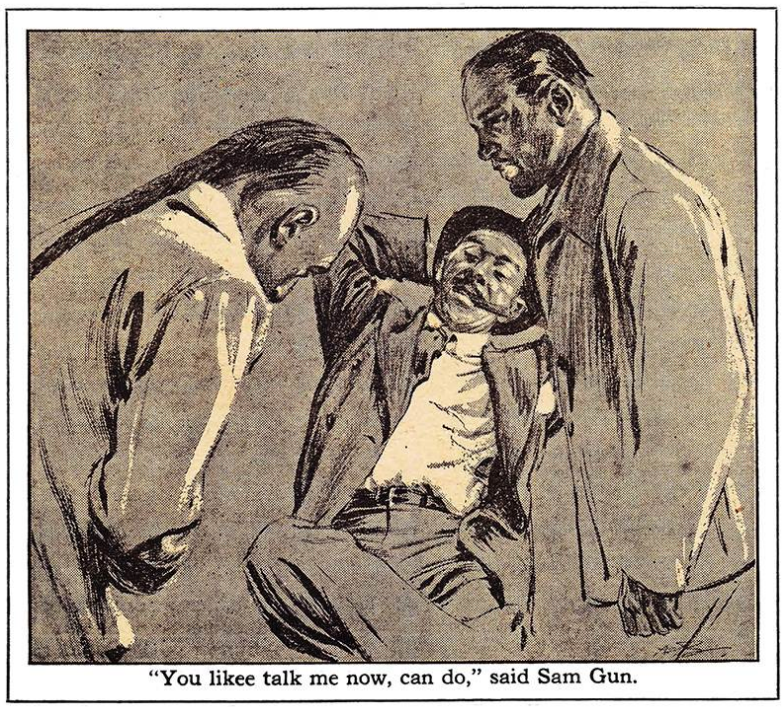
“Where is he? What did he tell you?”

“We will get a clearer story, first, from Mary Connor, Porter's housekeeper. Perhaps we would better go out to Porter's house now, and talk to Miss Connor and Sam Gun.”

“You're the doctor. Let's go.”

WHEN Mary Connor faced James Lee and Lieutenant Warren, it was evident to them that she had been weeping. Her eyes were red and her voice was still thick with emotion.

“I must ask you some unpleasant questions, Miss Connor,” James Lee said. “No matter how personal they may be, I beg you to tell the truth. We are your friends. No matter how difficult it may be, tell us the truth.”



“You likee talk me now, can do,” said Sam Gun.

“You like talk me now, can do,” said Sam Gun.

Mary Connor seemed to anticipate the theme of her inquisition. Bravely, “I will tell you the truth,” she promised.

“How long have you been employed in Jonas Porter's house?”

“More than twenty years.”

“Sam Gun, the Chinese cook, was working for Mr. Porter when you came?”

“He has worked for Mr. Porter nearly thirty years.”

“That is correct,” James Lee said. “Where did you meet Mr. Porter?”

“In Paris. I was touring France that summer during my college vacation.”

“How long ago was that?”

“Twenty-five years ago.”

“Was Mr. Porter in love with you—did he fall in love with you that year, in Paris?”

Mary Connor closed her eyes for a moment. Presently, almost whispering, “He told me that he loved me then,” she said. “The first clay that we met—that moonlit evening—he told me that he loved me.”

“And you—you answered him?”

“I said that I loved him. And I

did.”

“You promised to marry him?”

“Yes.”

“But you never married?”

“No.”

“Why? You quarreled?”

“He was married; the divorce was difficult—and in the meantime —”

“Let me say it for you,” James Lee offered, when the woman's voice failed her. “In the meantime you bore him a child—and that child is now Helen Porter.”

Tears flooded Mary Connor's eyes. For a moment she tried in vain to speak; and then in surrender to her emotions, she sobbed a tortured affirmative to James Lee's question.

She sobbed a tortured affirmative to Lee's question.

"Take it easy," Lieutenant Warren advised, his voice husky with sympathy. "Steady, now! Quit crying and tell us about it."

In a little while, "How do you knowall this?" the woman asked James Lee. "What good does it do to ask me these questions? You haven't—you haven't told Helen—who she is?"

"Not a word!" Lieutenant Warren interposed. Then, to assist Mary Connor: "What became of this fellow Porter's first wife?"

"She was killed in a motor accident a year after Helen was born."

"And still Porter would not marry you?" James Lee asked.

"He accused me of being unfaithful to him." Mary Connor's lips tautened, and she suddenly seemed to regain complete control of herself. "Probably for his own convenience. He was wholly unscrupulous in his affairs with other women—dozens of them. Before I knew exactly what he was—and for Helen's sake—I came into his house-as his housekeeper. I have been here ever since, a servant, apart from my own child, forced to protect her

with my silence, forced to serve other women who were guests in this private hell of mine-and forced to smile through all of it! I could have killed him a hundred times over!"

"And did you kill him—this first time?" Lieutenant Warren inquired blandly.

"Do not answer that question!" James Lee advised. To the Lieutenant: "If you will pardon me," he suggested, "perhaps this line of questioning has brought us nothing but bitter fruit."

Lieutenant Warren nodded agreement. Then, with mild sarcasm: "Where do we go from here?"

"I talked at some length with Sam Gun," James Lee said. He turned to Mary Connor: "Please ask my old countryman to come in here. After you send him to me, I want you to talk with your daughter. She is probably in her room at the moment—waiting for you—wanting your arms about her."

"What do you mean?" Mary Connor's eyes widened with apprehension. "Did you—does she know about me?"

Evading this question, "Send Sam Gun to us at once," James Lee ordered. "Then ask your daughter what you will—and tell her what you will. I have talked with her."

THE old Chinese cook came into the room, and bowed with unusual ceremony to James Lee, and to Lieutenant Warren. "Long life, plenteous years, seven sons to mourn at your grave," he said, speaking the Cantonese dialect. Then, in pidgin: "You likee talk me now, can do. More better I ketchum large sleep."

"You will rest soon," James Lee said. "There is a last step to every journey, and for you the pathway of life has been rough. This man"—he indicated Lieutenant Warren—"this man is the Number One white police boss."

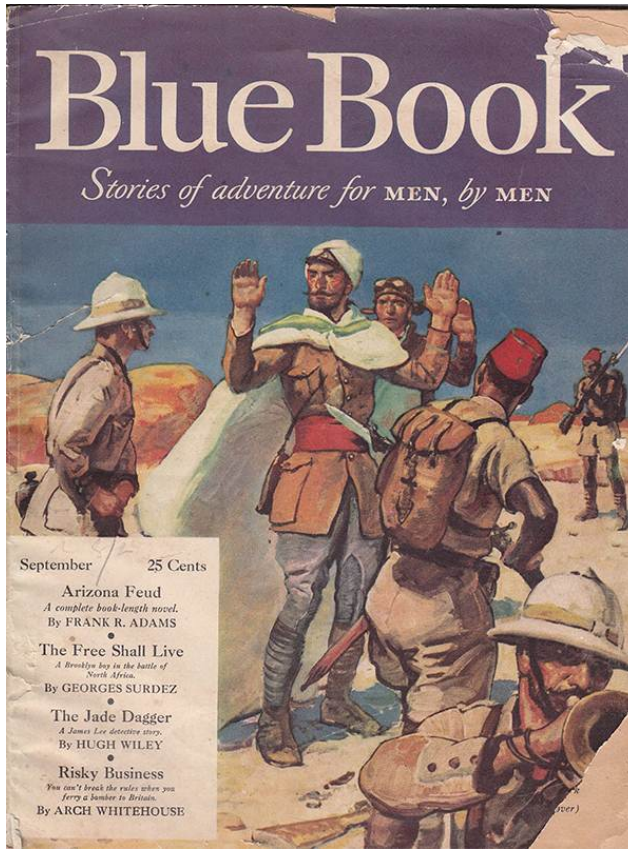
"Me sawy him," Sam Gun said. "Me ol' man. Him good man. Him very smart man."

"He's smart enough," .James Lee admitted. To Warren: "I found a

pearl button under Porter—torn from Sam Gun's white coat. The coat was reeking with that carnation pomade that Porter used on his hair. And there were a few drops of blood on Sam Gun's shoes." Abruptly he demanded of the old Chinese: "Why did you kill your master?"

"Me kill him," the old man confessed, not without a trace of satisfaction in his voice, "because he allee time make Missy Connor cry. She cry twenty years. Bad man-makee ev'rybody not happy. Me stick him allee same pig. Stick large jade knife in him. Now ev'rybody happy. Missy Connor not cry now. Missy Helen she ketchum large happy With Mistah Well-man. Ketchum large boy family. I stickum Mistah Porter-ev'rybody happy." Sam Gun smiled wearily. "Me tired now—likee long time sleep.…Wake up in hebben." He smiled at Lieutenant Warren: "Me likee die—ketchum long sleep. Numbah One police boss can do?"

"Can do," Lieutenant Warren said. "Anything to oblige a friend. But if you get more than twenty years, I'm a Chinaman."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The Saint Detective Magazine, April 1955
MR.WONG

CIGARETTE OF DEATH

(Originally published as The Room of Death – Collier's, April 13th 1940)

by Hugh Wiley

"One cigarette before I die!" was James Lee's plea. To the Russian it seemed unlikely that a smoke ring could tighten into a noose.

Armchair adventure may be quite beguiling enchanting and remote from reality, or it may be so harsh, frightening and immediate that it seems to be happening right before your eyes in a room hazy with gunsmoke. But when a story is written with unsparing honesty the very harshness takes on an exciting quality we wouldn't trade for all the security on earth. Hugh Wiley who ruggedly realistic crime yarns featuring the spirited James Lee have appeared frequently in COLLIER'S scores here a veritable double bull's-eye.

(Publisher's note: This is a Cold War rewrite of a World War II story. See "The Room of Death" for the original. References to Japan have changed to Russia/The Soviet Union. Also, numerous conversational transitions have changed.)

AT MIDNIGHT, Jane Young said to James Lee over the telephone, "They will kill him!" Her voice was thin with fear. "I know they will kill him, Mr. Lee. You must do something to save him!"

“Come down to my apartment at once,” James Lee directed. “No more of this over the wire.”

“I will be there in ten minutes.”

A moment later, James Lee was talking to his assistant, Frank Wilbur, over the wire, “Walter Young has disappeared,” he said. “We were discussing him last week, remember? The millionaire insurance man—”

“Yes, I remember.” Wilbur said. “I met him during that insurance racket crusade. What’s the play?”

“Come over to my apartment and we’ll get to work. Mrs. Young is on her way here now. I want you to sit in.”

In his library, after he had introduced Frank Wilbur he turned to Jane Young, and spoke without evasion. “Why do you think your husband is in danger?” He noticed that her hands were trembling.

“May I get you a drink?” he asked, solicitously.

Jane Young compressed her lips. “Thank you, no. I’m quite all right. But I am sure that something terrible has happened to Walter. I’ve always known that some of those desperate men would kill him.”

“What desperate men?” James Lee asked. “Please take your time and tell the story.”

“Walter has sent fifty of them to the penitentiary in the last ten years—firebugs and wreckers and insurance killers. Some of them have been released. I know they have him. He’s probably being tortured. I’ve warned him a hundred times. So has Mason Romer.”

“Who is Mason Romer?” James Lee asked.

“His secretary. He’s rather arrogant and stupid, but he knows everything about Walter’s affairs.”

James Lee nodded to Frank Wilbur. “Get Mr. Romer in here right away,” he directed. To Jane Young he said: “Has your husband received any threats lately?"

“I don’t know. Walter used to show me the most terrible letters, but he stopped that. They frightened me.”

“You will forgive the next question,” James Lee said. “Was Mr. Young interested in another woman?"

Jane Young flushed, then shook her head decisively. “Absurd! I know there was no one else. I’m positive of that.”

"That complicates things,” James Lee reflected. Then, aloud, “When was Mr. Young last seen?"

“We had a dinner engagement in Burlingame for seven o’clock. He usually spends an hour or two at his club before he comes home, but he was not in the club tonight. He left his office at one o’clock, and that’s the last we have heard of him.”

Her face faltered.

“Mr. Romer will know about his engagements?”

“Of course.”

“Did your husband drive his own car?”

“His car is still in the Central Garage, half a block from his office.”

“Why haven’t you turned the case over to the police?”

Jane Young’s face grew more strained. “Because his captors might kill him if it became public.”

James Lee’s next question was soft spoken. “Why do you assume

that he has not yet been killed?"

"Because he is worth more to his enemies alive than dead." Jane said, and her eyes did not waiver.

"Why do you think his captors are holding him for ransom?"

"Because they are the kind of men who would do just that."

"You seem to know who they are. Unless you are reasonably sure of their identity, your ideas may complicate our work."

"I see what you mean, Mr. Lee. But I don't know who they are, with any certainty. I was thinking of a gang of insurance murderers that Walter sent to the penitentiary ten years ago. One of them, the most desperate, was released last week."

"Who is he?"

"His name was Sears. He had other names. Mason Romer will tell you all about it." Terror suddenly clouded Jane Young's eyes. "Mr. Lee, I'm afraid my husband is dead!"

"No—he's probably alive," James Lee said with quiet confidence. "Maybe you had better return to your home. I will call you after I get through with Romer. Let me take you to your car."

When he put Jane Young in her car, he pressed her hand reassuringly. "We will do everything that can be done to find your husband. Please go straight to your home. I will telephone you after I have talked with Mr. Romer."

Jane Young started her car. When she was half a block down the street, driving well enough, James Lee turned toward the dimly lighted entrance to his apartment.

In the shadowed doorway, as the door swung open, he felt the searing pain of a bullet plowing through the flesh of his left forearm. The same instant he heard the smacking explosion of two pistol shots directly across the street. He slammed the door from the inside. Then he saw a splintered bit of the frame where the second shot, missing its mark, had struck.

Ten feet ahead of him, against the baseboard of the entrance hall, he saw the little battered projectile. He picked it up, still hot.

In the library of his apartment, he said to Frank Wilbur: “First you’d better help me dress and bandage my arm. Then I want you to size this up and tell me about the gun that fired it.”

Frank Wilbur scowled at the blood dripping from James Lee’s left elbow.

“Flesh wound,” James Lee said. “Let’s get a dressing on it before Romer shows up.”

“Who did it?”

“Some third-rate gunman from across the street. He shot me right after I put Mrs. Young into her car.”

Frank WiIbur’s examination of the pistol bullet was interrupted for a moment when Mason Romer arrived at James Lee’s apartment. The visitor, evidently none too pleased at having his night disturbed, replied to Wilbur’s greeting with a question. “What’s all the excitement?"

“Sit down, Mr. Romer,” Lee invited. “I’m sorry that we had to disturb you, but the occasion seemed to justify it.”

Mason Romer lighted a cigarette. “What occasion, may I ask?"

“Your chief’s disappearance,” James Lee answered shortly. “Walter Young has vanished. There are reasons to suspect that he is in serious danger.”

Romer yawned. “What makes you think he’s in danger?” he asked coolly. “He’s probably barging around on some new reform mission. Under cover.”

“His wife fears that he is dead,” James Lee said. “What do you know about an insurance killer by the name of Sears?”

“Mr. Young socked him ten or twelve years ago,” Romer answered. “Sears was mixed up with several killings. He was released a week ago.”

“Do you know of any threats that Sears made against Walter Young?”

“Once or twice during the trial he threatened to kill him. Lots of people threaten Mr. Young. . . . May I ask, Mr. Lee, if you have any other reasons for fearing foul play except Mrs. Young’s story? She’s a bit flighty in that respect, you know.”

For a moment James Lee considered the increasingly painful wound in his left arm. “Yes,” he said, “I have other reasons for believing that Mr. Young may be in serious trouble.” His voice sharpened. “Who would kill him, Mr. Romer? Who were his enemies?”

Mason Romer deliberated before he replied. Then, in a somewhat pompous tone, “A crusader with Mr. Young’s enthusiasm creates many enemies. He’s been fighting arsonists and accident fakers and wreckers many years.”

“What kind of wreckers?”

“Crooked shipowners. Mr. Young handles marine insurance with his other interests. He virtually owns half a dozen ships—the Silver Stack Line has them under lease.”

“I don’t follow you,” James Lee said. “Do you imply that his interest in the Silver Stack Line involves physical danger to Mr. Young?”

“Possibly,” Romer said. “His board of directors—”

“Just a moment,” Lee interrupted. Frank Wilbur had slipped in from the laboratory and had placed a penciled note on his chief’s

desk. “Pardon me, Mr. Romer.”

James Lee scanned Wilbur’s report on the bullet. “Caliber close to decimal point, three thrity-one. Weight checks with nothing in the American or foreign records. It must be new type of gun—maybe homemade?"

“You can speak freely, Wilbur. Mr. Romer might be of great help to us. Notice anything else about the bullet?"

“Well, the tin percentage is away up. Looks like Malay metal.”

“That settles it!” said James “That bullet was fired from one of the new Russian automatics from a very busy factory in the Urals. I got a confidential bulletin on that automatic recently.”

He turned to Mason Romer. “This narrows things down somewhat. Mr. Romer, have Walter Young’s activities ever brought him into any dealings with agents of the Soviet Union?"

Romer smiled in a superior way. “That’s just what I was about to mention before we were interrupted. The board of directors of the Silver Stack Line wants to sell all the ships to a South American Line for a good price. We suspect the line is Soviet controlled. Mr. Young has opposed this in the face of considerable pressure.”

Frank Wilbur whistled softly as he saw the grim look on Lee’s face. The visitor rose.

“However, if I may say so,” he remarked, “you are probably barking up the wrong tree, and Mr. Young is safe at home by this time. Why don’t you call him and find out?”

James Lee reached for the telephone and called Walter Young’s residence number. A drowsy servant answered him.

“Let me speak to Mr. Young.”

“Mr. Young is not at home.”

“Let me speak to Mrs. Young.”

“Mrs. Young has not returned.”

“Thank you,” James Lee said. He hung up and faced Mason Romer.

“This gets more serious every minute,” he said crisply. “Mrs. Young has had plenty of time to reach her home, but something must have happened on the way. Your information has been very useful. Mr. Romer. Just before you arrived I was hit by a shot from a pistol made in the U.S.S.R. Now you tell me that Soviet agents have more than a little to gain by removing Walter Young, who has been missing since one o’clock this afternoon. No more time must be lost!”

“Where are you going?” Frank Wilbur asked Lee.

“I’m going to see if Sung Ying can help us. It’s a long chance—but we have no time for routine methods. He’s the one man in the whole city who might put us on the trail of the enemy. Telephone Sung Ying that I’m coming over to have a talk with him.”

“Why not tell him to come here?” Wilbur suggested. “You’ve been shot once tonight.”

“We can’t waste a moment. It will be too late.”

“Then at least let me go with you.”

“Stay here,” James Lee ordered, “and after you tell Sung Ying that I’m on my way, stick close to the phone. Mr. Romer will keep you company.”

“But—but I’m not staying here, sir!’ blustered Romer. “You have

no right—”

James Lee shook his head. “I’ve no time to explain. But I will say that if you leave this apartment you may be in great danger of your life. Mrs. Young left here a short time ago, and has not been heard of since. If I work fast I might be able to save her from death—but I cannot permit you to take a similar chance!"

Disregarding the outraged protests of his guest, James Lee left his apartment.

The streets were almost deserted at this hour, and in the five blocks of his journey toward Grant Avenue, Lee encountered but three pedestrians. When he reached the central section of the colony of his countrymen, he proceeded along the colorful thoroughfare until he reached Jackson Street. He turned to the left here and walked up the hill until he came to a narrow door between the Smiling Friend Pawnshop and the jewelry store operated by Sung Ying, chief of the Pacific Division of the Chinese Nationalists Intelligence Service. He knocked lightly once on the door, and it was immediately opened to admit him.

“I need your counsel and advice,” he said, in greeting. “I have a problem in your field, Sung Ying. Walter Young has disappeared.”

“The president of the Silver Stack Line?” asked Sung Ying. “I know him. That is serious. Let us go into my office.”

James Lee preceded him into the small room.

“How can I help you?” asked Sung Ying.

“Walter Young has various enemies, but I have good reason to believe that his present peril comes from Soviet agents in San Francisco, because of his firm opposition to the sale of his ships to a line that is almost certainly under communist control. Does that strike you as being motive enough for getting rid of him?”

Sung Ying’s eyes narrowed. “More than enough!” he said. “Jalowski and Kalletin are operating in this district. They are killers. When did Young disappear?”

“At least six hours ago.”

“Then they have probably finished him by this time,” Sung Ying said. “Jalowski has tried to kill me three times. He would not spare Walter Young. And Kalletin is even more ruthless.”

“Where can I find these murderous ones?"

“Jalowski will be in Chun Wong’s house on Post Street. My men have not seen Kalletin for two days. Chun Wong is a very good friend of the enemies of Nationalist China. His very skin glows red.”

“Chun Wong’s house—the grocery store, do you mean?" James Lee asked. “I know the place. Why haven’t you finished with Jalowski?”

“He has escaped me twice. He is a fox. And Kalletin is a gray Siberian wolf.”

“I may help to kill him?” James Lee requested. “You will forgive me if I offer my aid?”

“It is about time that we were rid of him,” Sung Ying said. “I will be delighted to accompany you.”

“I cannot express my gratitude. Tell me—if Jalowski and Kalletin have captured Walter Young and Mrs. Young, would they hold them in Chung Wong’s house—kill them there?”

“Undoubtedly. Dead men are awkward property. Chung Wong has a clever way of getting rid of them.”

“How is that?"

“The empty fish boxes,” Sung Ying explained. “There is a fish market in the rear of his grocery store. The empty boxes are returned to the waterfront fishermen each day. At least ten of Chung Wong’s victims have been buried in the night, miles at sea. . . . Wait until I get my coat—and a pair of guns—and we see if we can solve your problem. Are you armed?”

“Yes,” James Lee said. “One moment, my dear friend; I must let my office know where we are going, so that they can follow through on this if we fail.”

When he had Frank Wilbur on the line, he said: “Sung Ying and I are going to Chung Wong’s house on Post Street. We should be in the clear within an hour. If you do not hear from me, get hold of Riley and look things over.”

“I still think I should come with you,” Wilbur protested.

“Stay where you are. Is Romer all right?”

“He’s gone to sleep in his chair. He’s a funny customer.”

“Good! Now, check your time—two-thirteen—and if I don’t call you within an hour, follow up with Riley."

James Lee hung up the phone and turned to Sung Ying. “If anything happens to us, we temporize with Chun Wong for an hour, until Wilbur blasts his way in with the rescue party. Let’s go!”

Nearing Chung Wong’s house, “Park the car here,” Sung Ying advised. “Park the car here. We’ll walk the next two blocks.”

“Right. Have you been inside of Chung Wong’s house before?”

“No. I have been in the store. It is a three-story building, you remember, but our job is on the ground floor or below that. What do you suggest if we suddenly discover that I am unable to talk them into opening the apartment door?"

“We shoot the lock off and go ahead,” James Lee said. “The lives of innocent people are at stake.”

At the doorway of Chung Wong’s house, Sung Ying rang the bell twice before a thin voice piped through the battered tin speaking tube set above the bell. “Who calls?”

“Two men of the Service,” Sung Ying answered, in Japanese. “Be quick! Open the door!”

“Kalletin?”

Instantly deciding from the question that Kalletin was expected, Sung Ying answered. “Yes. Kalletin and distinguished companion from south office.”

The click of two bolts followed. “We have long expected you,” spoke the thin voice through the speaking tube. “Enter.”

“Great luck!" James Lee whispered to Sung Ying. “They may have held Young alive waiting for the Russians. If they open fire, shoot them down as they come. Keep on my left.”

A Chinaman stood at the far end of the hallway before an open door. As the two marched forward into the dim light of an exposed bulb, something suspicious in their movements must have made the man realize his error. A deafening roar sounded in the hall, and a wild bullet smashed the light overhead.

“Down him!” James Lee directed.

Sung Ying fired twice at the silhouette of the gunman in the doorway. The man went down.

Instantly, from beyond the lighted doorway there lifted a cackling chorus of voices.

“We lose,” James Lee said. “No chance, but keep your guns going.”

He leaped through the doorway, firing as he went. A man faced him with a swinging automatic. James Lee’s shot brought him down. Two others were shooting wildly. Lee’s gun knocked one of them over, Sung Ying got the other. Then, out of the shadows in the corner of the room, there came a single explosion and the weapon dropped from Sung Ying’s nerveless left hand. James Lee fired quickly and the Russian sprawled on his face.

“That is Jalowski,” Sung Ying said. “Good work! Chung Wong is dead there by the door.”

“Kalletin?”

“Not here,” Sung Ying said. “Remember—he was only expected. Come, through this door! There may be others.”

The inner door of the room was locked. James Lee fired once through the lock, and turned to his companion. He saw for the first time that Sung Ying was seriously wounded. Flowing blood stained the left side of Sung Ying’s coat.

“Let me go first,” Sung Ying said. “I’ll last for a while yet.”

James Lee blocked the way with his tortured arm. “You are badly hurt,” he objected. “If they get me, do your best.”

He slipped his empty automatic into his coat pocket and reached for his second gun that he carried in a shoulder holster. He kicked the door open. Save for two occupants, Walter Young and his wife, gagged and wired to their chairs, the room was empty.

“We win!" James Lee whispered. “They’re alive!"

“Held for Kalletin’s coming,” Sung Ying faltered.

“You are in bad shape, my friend. Do you think you could bear up for just a few moments longer?"

“I will do my best,” said Sung Ying.

Jane Young, unconscious, was barely breathing. James Lee tore the padded cloth from her mouth. Color came to her ashen face as he turned to perform the same quick service for her husband. Walter Young gulped the smoke-laden air for a moment, and then, falteringly, “Is she dead?” he cried.

In that busy minute, James Lee was unaware that behind him his

countryman, who had sadly misjudged his strength, was slipping quietly to the floor. Collapsing from the pain of his wound, Sung Ying lay across the threshold.

"Mrs. Young is breathing," James Lee said, turning again to the problem of breaking the twisted wires that bound the woman to her chair. "She will be all right when—"

A strange voice from the doorway interrupted him.

"Good evening, Mr. Lee. You've saved me a great deal of trouble by coming to die here. I am Kalletin."

James Lee whirled to face the invader. The Russian, smiling, stood in the doorway with a leveled automatic.

"If you please, do not touch the wire on the hands of the lady."

"Kalletin" James Lee saw in a flash that here was death.

"Kalletin, yes! Having honor first time to meet the famous James Lee. I am grateful to you for coming here to die, saving me the trouble of finding you." Kalletin walked into the room, glancing down at the unconscious Sung Ying as he stepped daintily over the body of the wounded man. "Everything finish now. You have had very bad luck."

Five feet away from James Lee, Kalletin steadied the automatic for the shot that meant the end of life for his opponent.

With death but one brief moment ahead of him, James Lee smiled at the Russian. "A cigarette?" he temporized. "One cigarette before I die. It is your generous custom, as I remember."

Kalletin nodded. "One cigarette, yes," he consented. "One cigarette and some conversation. But do not move your hand fast, please."

James Lee reached for a cigarette and lighted it. As he struck the match, he saw, back of Kalletin, the fingers of Sung Ying's right hand close convulsively in a subconscious gesture inspired by the sound of the Russian's hated voice. Sung Ying's eyelids fluttered. Then, with his eyes open, his right hand moved toward the weapon that he had dropped at the moment of his collapse.

James Lee, fearful that Kalletin might read some evidence of Sung Ying's awakening in Walter Young's eyes or actions, held his lighted cigarette away from him and regarded its glowing tip.

"Thank you for this blessing of tobacco," he said to Kalletin. "If you will permit me to enjoy a little more of it?"

"Enjoy it by all means," Kalletin said. "Why did you come here, Mr. Lee? Certainly you are a very large fool, far more of a fool than Sung Ying. James Lee, a Chinese man. Russians are much smarter than Chinese men. I am an old man, but you, James Lee are a very young child."

Sung Ying's fingers had closed on his automatic.

Without evident effort, James Lee compelled himself to address Kalletin in an even voice. "It is true," he said, "that your discernment in this instance has merit. I admit that you enjoy a certain temporary superiority—"

Sung Ying's automatic inched up in line with the Russian's heart.

Kalletin smiled at James Lee. "First," he said, "I Shall close the door so that no one will hear the shot." With his gun still leveled at James Lee's heart, Kalletin edged toward the door.

James Lee realized that another backward step would bring Sung Ying within range of the Russian's vision.

"This cigarette—" he began; "you promised me that I might enjoy —"

The crash of Sung Ying's gun ended the sentence. Kalletin, dead before he fell, left life with his eyes searching in wonderment for a reason why his heart had suddenly exploded under the impact of the bullet from a dead man's gun.

"Oh, good man!" James Lee exclaimed, smiling at Sung Ying as he leaped toward the open door. "Play the game, giant of courage, for one more small moment, until I return!"

Over a telephone, three minutes after Kalletin had died, James Lee spoke to Frank Wilbur. "A surgeon and an ambulance, quick, to Chung Wong's house on Post Street," he said.

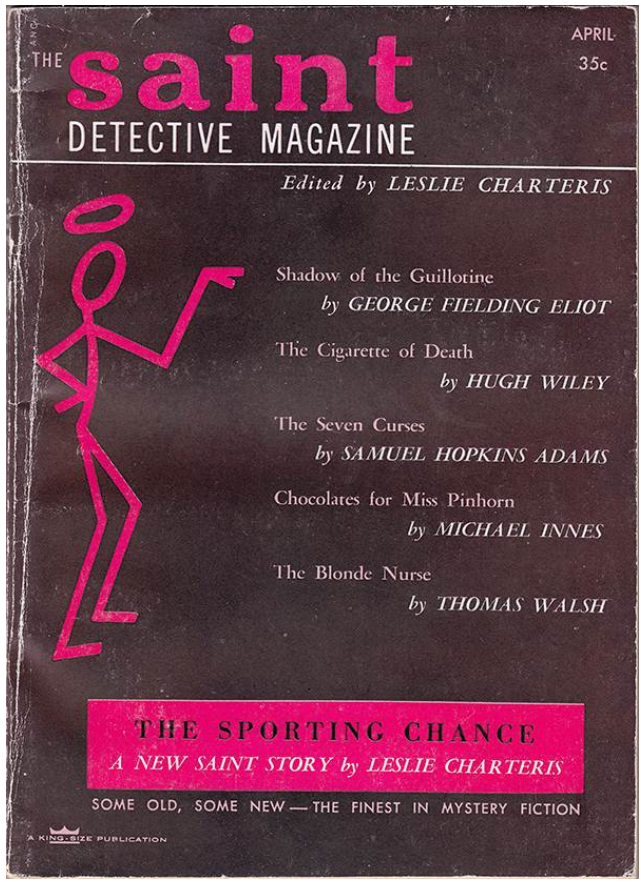
"Sung Ying is hurt."

"And you?"

"I'm all right," James Lee said. "Young and his wife are safe. Bring Riley with you. There may be some more bad actors drifting in."

"I'll be there in five minutes. Mason Romer just woke up. He wants to know if anything has happened yet."

James Lee frowned. "Tell Mr. Romer he is free to go home to bed," he said. "That's where I'd like to be myself. It's been a rather crowded evening!"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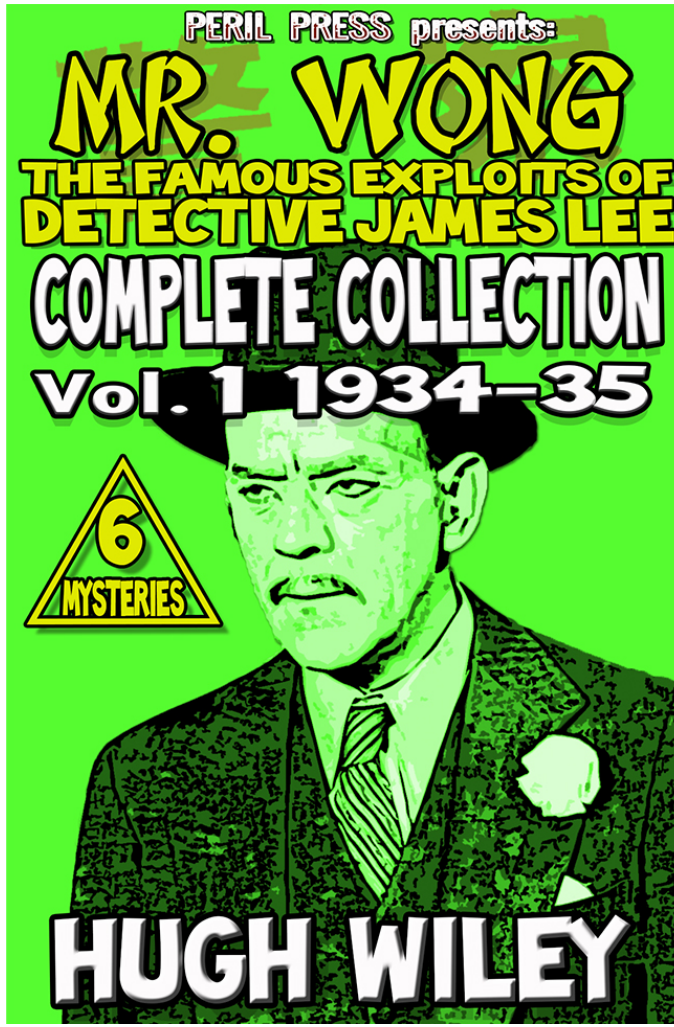

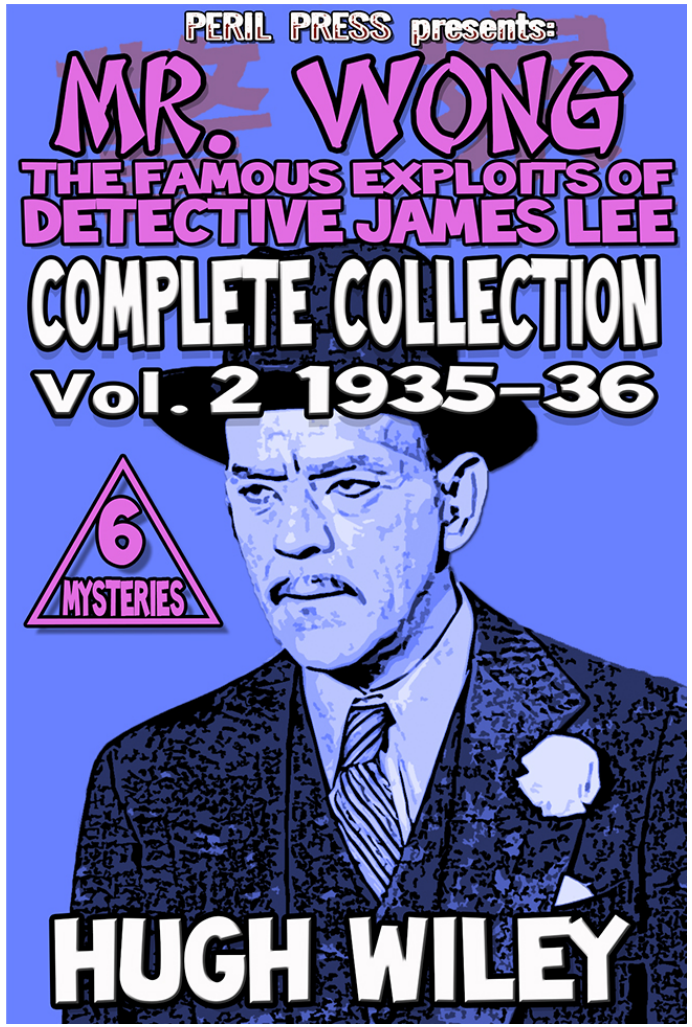
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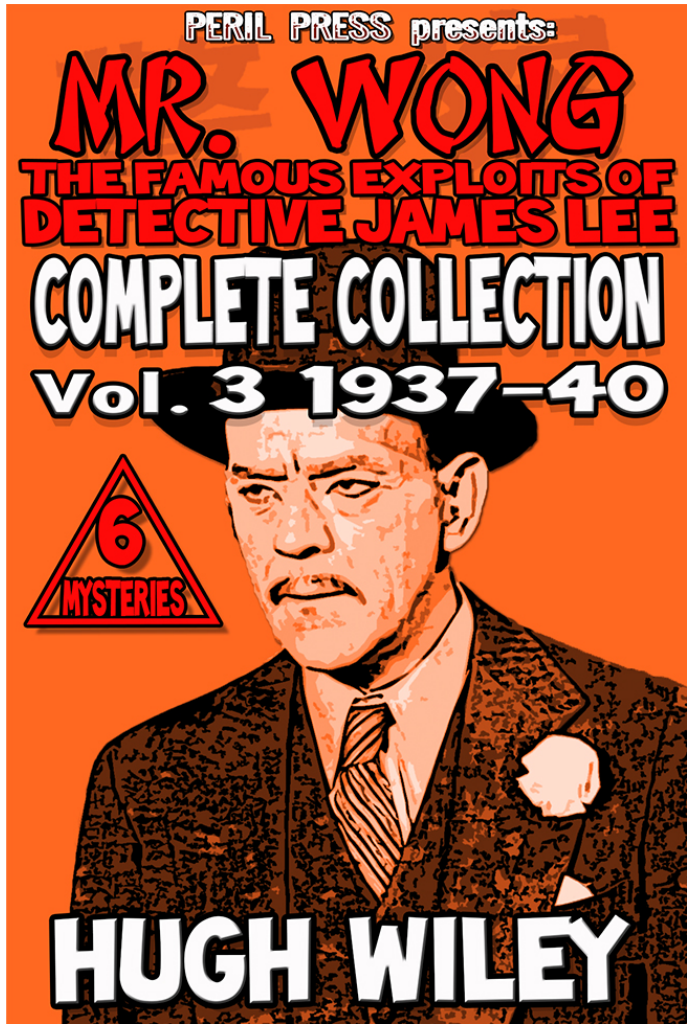
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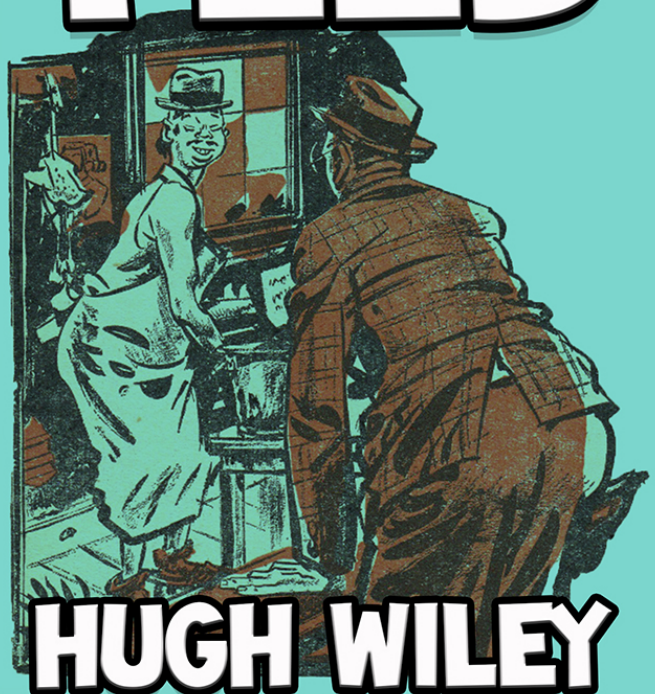

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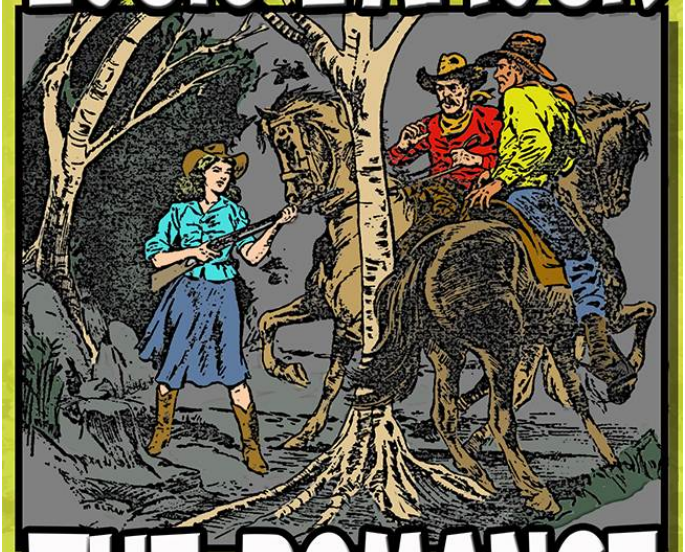

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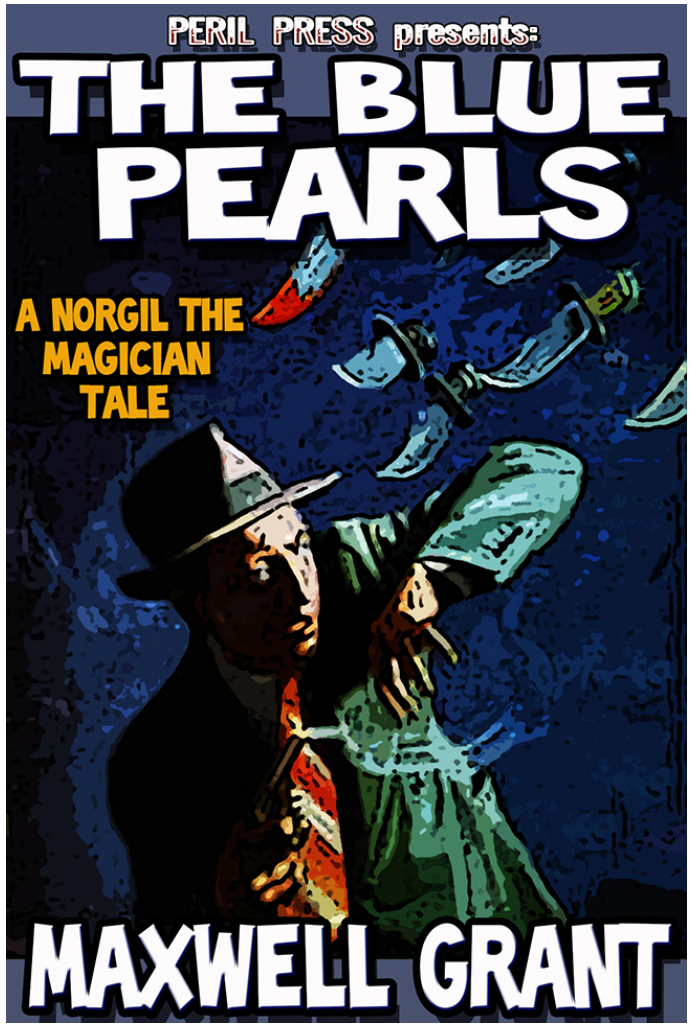
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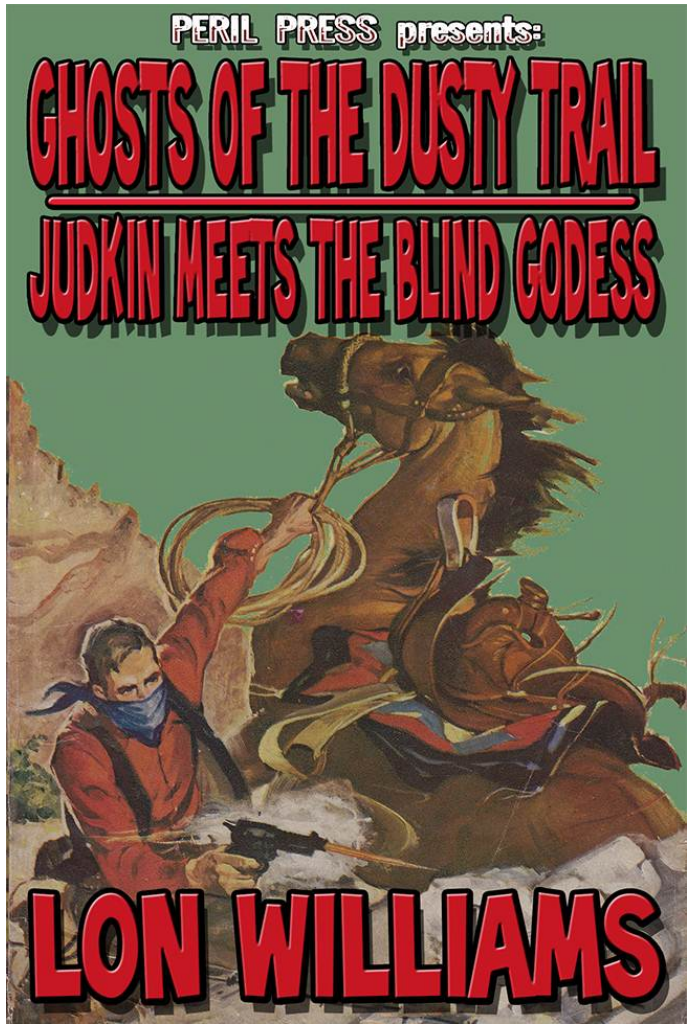
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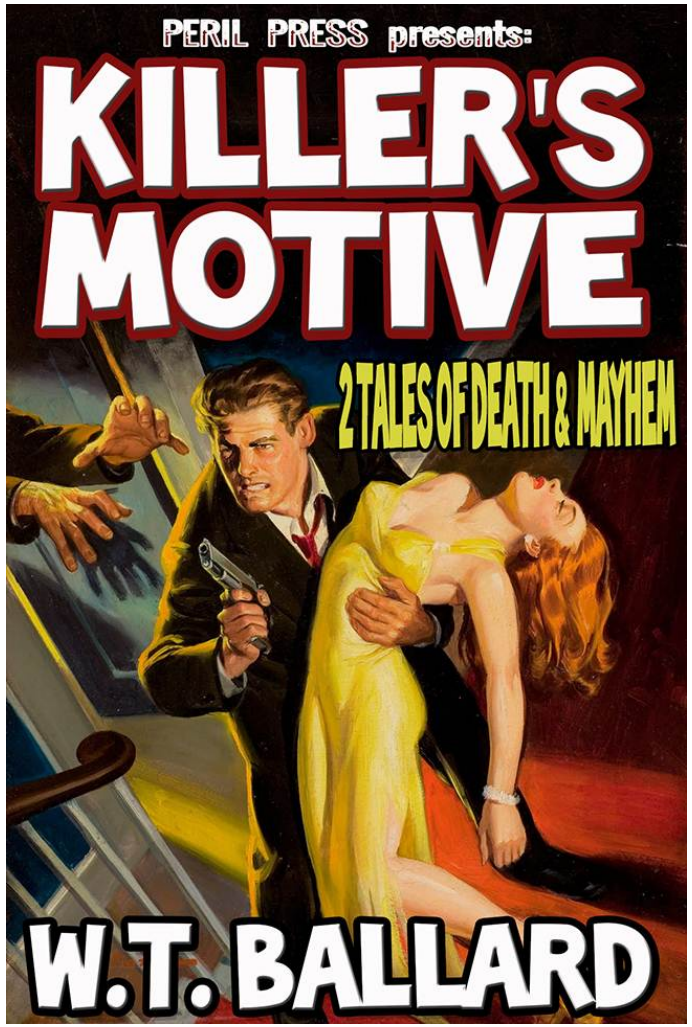
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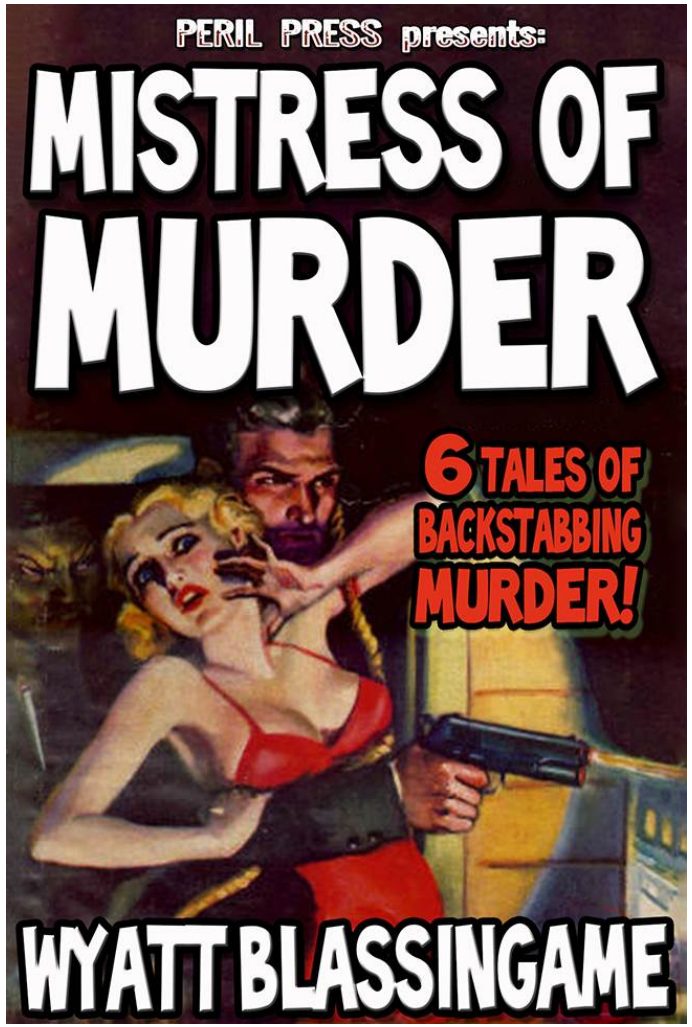
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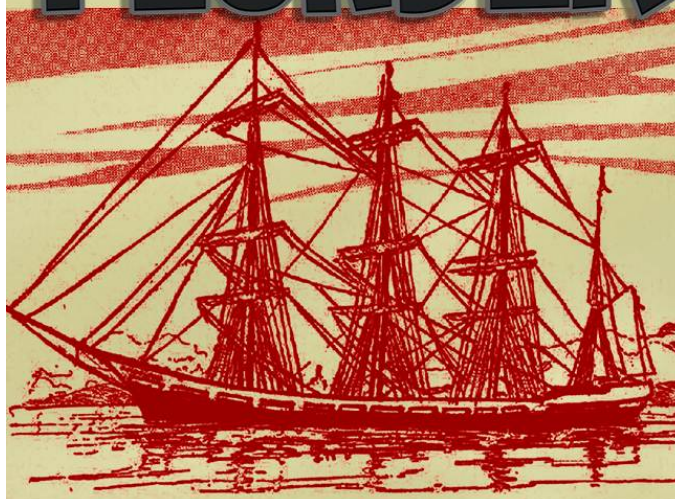

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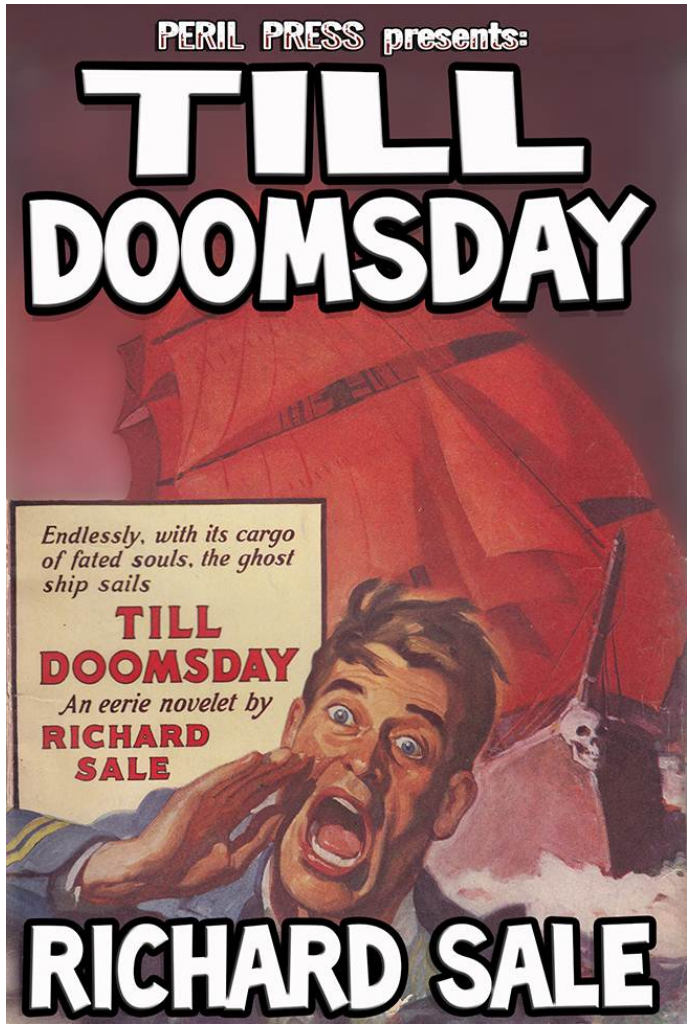
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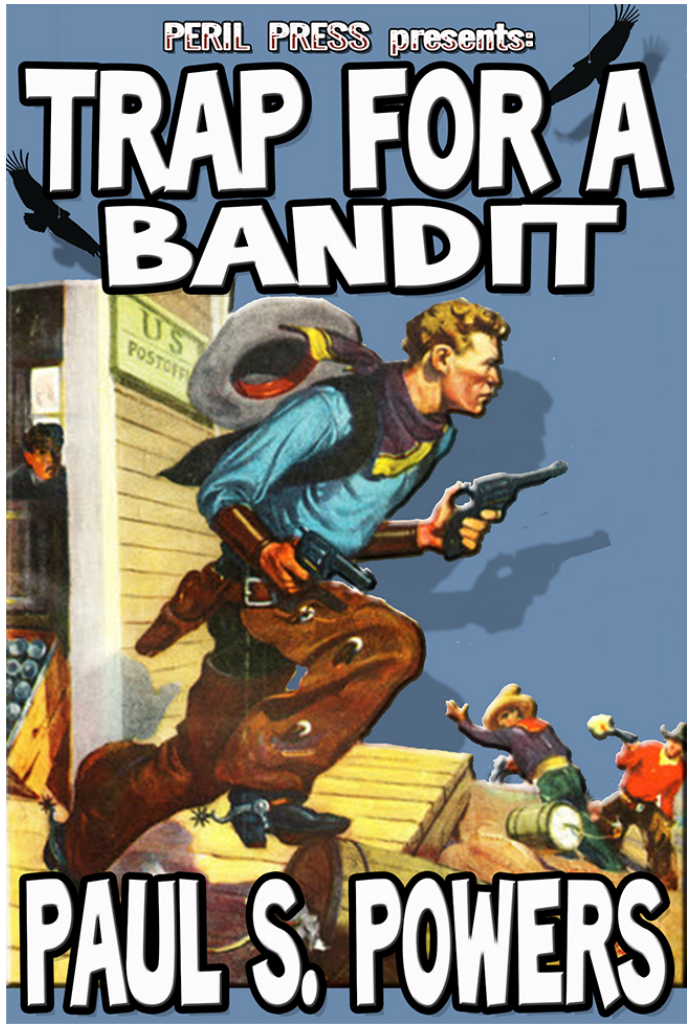
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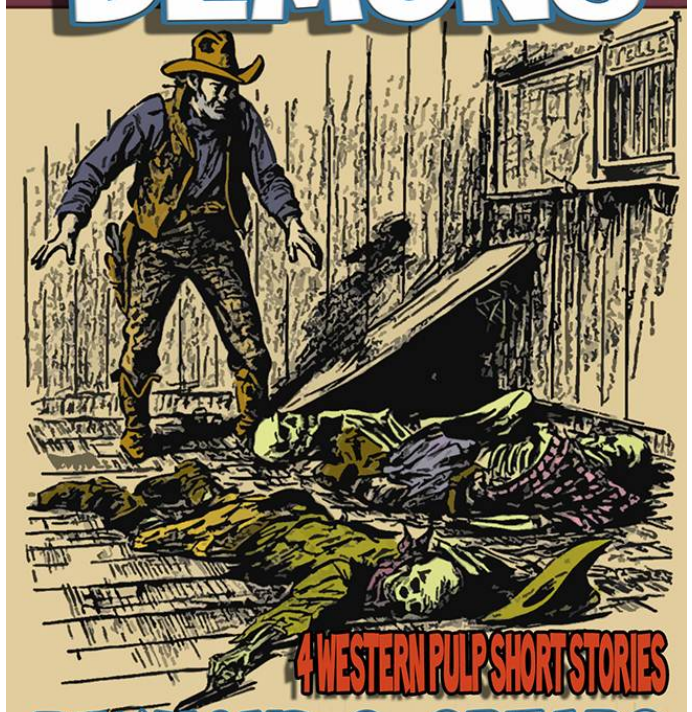

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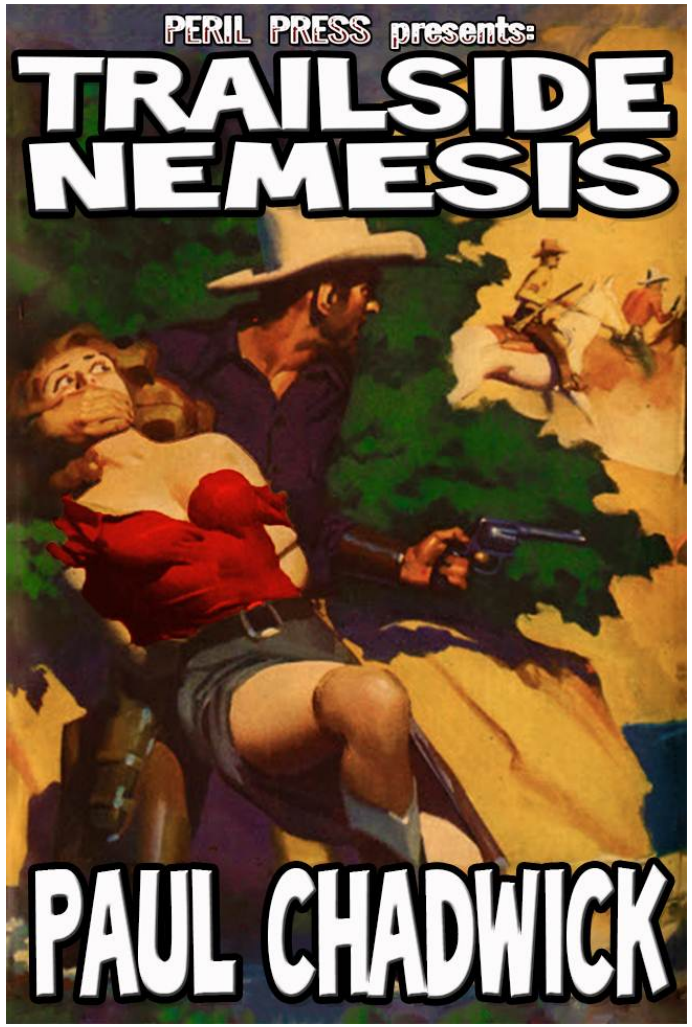
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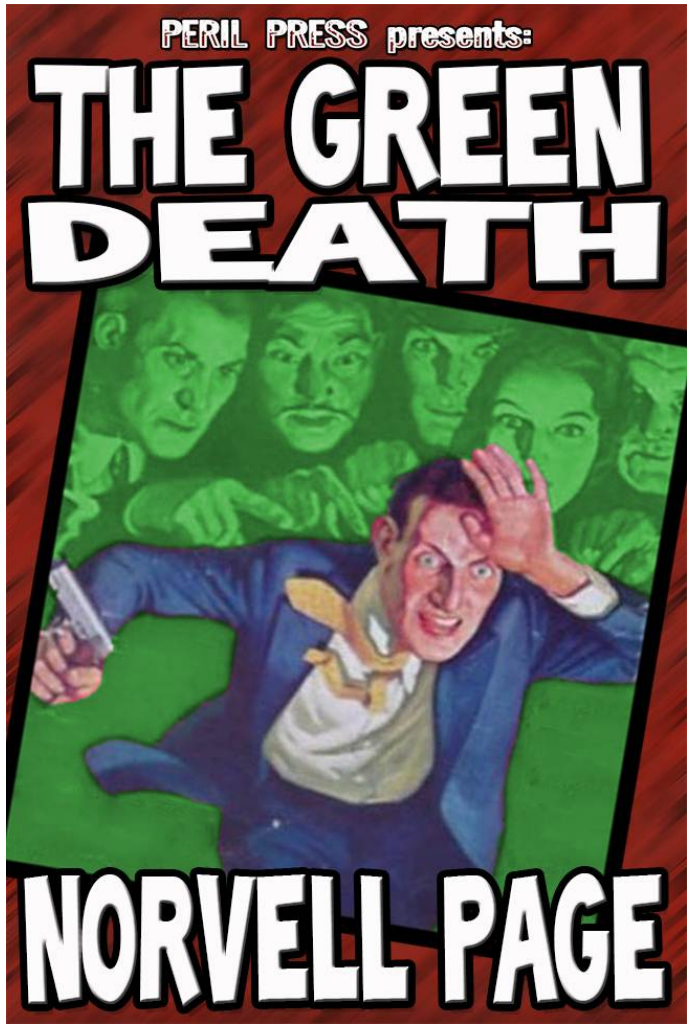
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